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The Wait Is Over

*Rain can't dampen enthusiasm
as Nebraska shows off its new facilities*



Brian Hill

FANS AMONG a record crowd of 85,181 at newly expanded Memorial Stadium couldn't wait to release the red balloons traditionally let go after Nebraska's first score.

Junior transfer Kenny Wilson, part of NU's I-back committee, sprinted 29 yards for an apparent touchdown midway through the first quarter. But as the majority of the balloons went skyward, the play was called back because of a holding penalty.

The Husker faithful, who had waited through a long offseason and weathered pregame rain showers, had to wait two more possessions and almost seven minutes longer before the real thing came on a 13-yard touchdown pass from Zac Taylor to tight end Matt Herian. That play was a fitting start for a team which will rely heavily on its senior quarterback and was welcoming back a standout receiver who hadn't played since suffering a severe leg injury late in the 2004 season.

Taylor would complete 22-of-33 passes to nine different receivers for 287 yards and three touchdowns. Herian was the first of seven Huskers, including four tight ends, to score a touchdown in the season-opening 49-10 victory over Louisiana Tech.

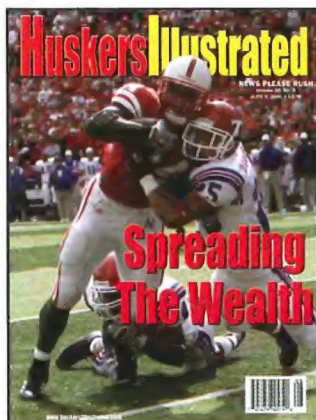
You can read much, much more about the much-anticipated start of the 2006 season in this edition of *Huskers Illustrated*.

ON THE COVER

NU sophomore I-back Cody Glenn powers his way in from 1 yard out with 7 seconds remaining in the first half. Glenn was one of seven Huskers to score a touchdown in the season-opening 49-10 victory over Louisiana Tech. Cover photo by Scott Bruhn.

Sophomore guard Mike Huff, a first-time starter, is the subject of "Spotlight," and backup offensive lineman Newt Lingenfelter answers "10 Questions." Our recruiting series continues with a look at the last recruiting class of Bill Jennings, which was inherited by Bob Devaney.

The high hopes for the new season have been building since last Dec. 29, when Nebraska capped a three-game winning streak with a stirring 42-28 victory over Michigan in the Alamo Bowl. That finish led to a No. 20 ranking in the Associated Press preseason poll and a favorite's role in the Big 12 Conference North Division.



The anticipation has grown as NU put the finishing touches on the Tom and Nancy Osborne Athletic Complex and the Hawks Championship Center. According to a sports information release, a total of 11,349 fans took a tour of the facilities the night before the opener. The first fans were in line at 3:15 p.m., nearly three hours before the start of the tours, and the line stretched for more than six blocks to see the \$50-million project.

This issue contains photos of portions of the new facilities, including the 40-foot waterfall that dominates the atrium as you enter the Osborne facility.

"It is an outstanding building, because it represents, in my opinion, a championship atmosphere and environment," coach Bill Callahan said at a news conference four days before the opener. "I think this facility presents a very clear message to any athlete: That they are here to be the best." ■

Survey says . . .

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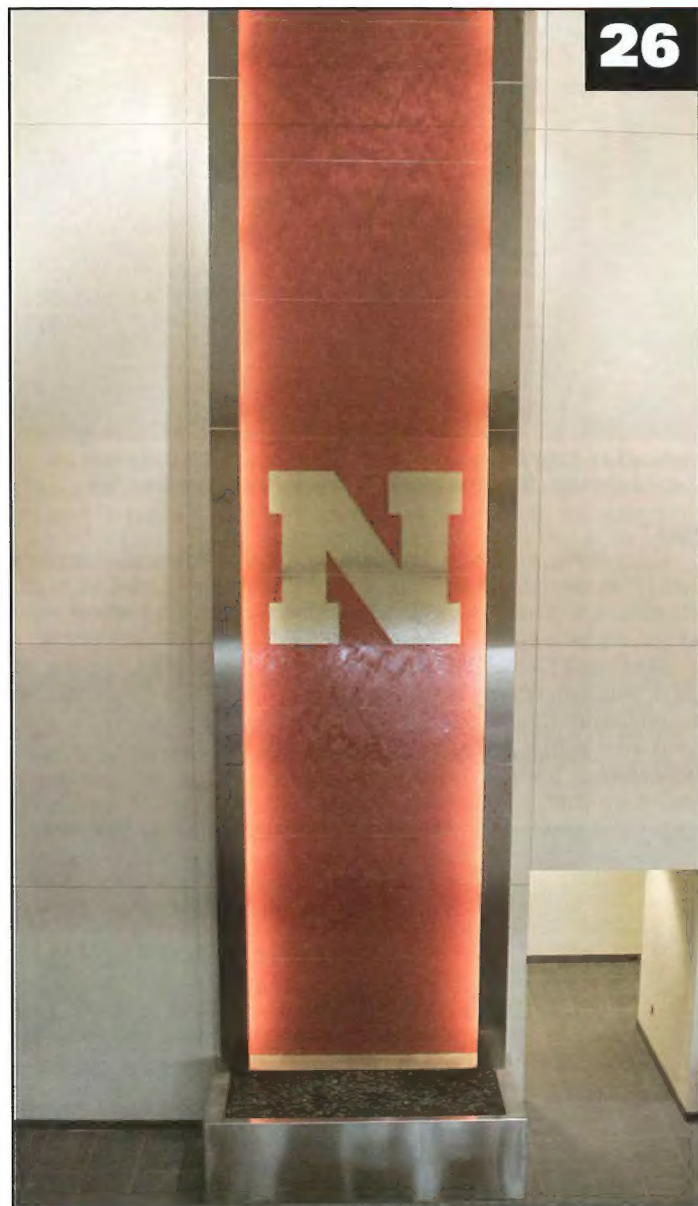
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Huskers Illustrated

CONTENTS

SEPT. 9, 2006 • VOLUME 26, NO. 8



26

26 NEW FACILITIES

A 40-foot waterfall greets visitors in the atrium of the Tom and Nancy Osborne Athletic Complex, part of the new construction at the north end of Memorial Stadium. *Photos by Scott Bruhn*

NEXT ISSUE

The Nicholls State review/USC preview edition will be mailed Sept. 11. Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

DEPARTMENTS

Letter From The Editor	4
Notebook	6
<i>Credit Adam Carriker's dad with the nickname for one of Nebraska's 2006 captains.</i>	
State Of The Huskers	8
<i>The arrival of former Arizona State quarterback Sam Keller was the focus of attention for several days.</i>	
From The Beat	9
<i>The team concept helped Nicholls State make the I-AA playoffs last season.</i>	
Recruiting Through The Years	10
<i>The recruitment of Monte Kiffin was more than just intense, it became downright nasty.</i>	
Spotlight	14
<i>For offensive lineman Mike Huff, it was a matter of going out and achieving his dream.</i>	
10 Questions	16
<i>Folks ask Newt Lingenfelter if he's from Plainview, and then they'll ask if, by chance, he knows Bob Lingenfelter.</i>	
Louisiana Tech Game Recap	17
Scouting Report	23
Recruiting	28
<i>NU appears to be in good shape to add, yet another, blue-chip cornerback or two out of the junior college ranks.</i>	
Volleyball	32
<i>Senior Dani Busboom sees the positives in her move from setter to the libero position.</i>	
Soccer	34
<i>As a junior, NU midfielder Tanya Dennis has taken on the challenge of being a leader.</i>	
Crossword Puzzle, Huskernutz	36
Final Word	38



14

NU's 'Captain Crunch'

"Captain Crunch." Credit Adam Carriker's dad with the nickname. Henceforth, that's what Nebraska's All-Big 12 defensive end should be called. At least he could be.

After Carriker was elected as a co-captain, his dad called from Kennewick, Wash., and wanted to "know if he has to call me 'Captain Crunch' now because he says I crunch everybody and I'm a captain," Carriker said, with a hint of hesitancy. "I'm like, 'Well, sure, that sounds good.'"

Carriker, quarterback Zac Taylor and defensive back-special teams specialist Brandon Rigoni are the captains this season. All three are seniors and "have the qualities you look for," coach Bill Callahan said. "They have shown great leadership, dedication and character both on and off the field."

Rigoni, who earned a scholarship this semester, grew up in Lincoln a Cornhusker fan, and "I don't think I could have imagined things going any better than they have for me," he said.

Carriker also grew up a Cornhusker fan, despite living in Washington. His dad is from Giltner, Neb., and he was born in Nebraska, though the family moved when he was 3-years old.

"I always wanted to come here and play," said Carriker. "To be named the captain of a team you've always looked up to, it's an incredible honor. It really is."

Taylor, in contrast, grew up an Oklahoma fan, which stands to reason. His dad, Sherwood, was a Sooner captain in 1979. Taylor is the first Oklahoman to be a Cornhusker captain since center Josh Heskew in 1998. Carriker is the first player from Washington ever to serve as a Nebraska captain.

"It's cool. It's a great honor that my teammates elected me to do something like that," Taylor said. "There have been a lot of great players in the past who have come to be captains, and so I've just got to kind of live up to the position and play well; that's about it."

Playing quarterback and being a captain "kind of goes hand-in-hand sometimes," said Taylor. "The quarterback's got to be the leader. I think it's good when people feel confident in the quarterback, confident in the offense. So I feel pretty good about



Nebraska's 2006 captains (pictured with coach Bill Callahan) are Zac Taylor (13), Brandon Rigoni (24) and Adam Carriker (90).

that."

Cory Ross, a captain last season, set the standard, Carriker said. "He was an inspiration, not a big guy. He played so hard. He played so well. I would say just the way he led and the type of person he was."

Ross and Daniel Bullocks, the other full-season captain in 2005, occasionally gave speeches to the team, said Carriker, and he might have to do that "every now and then," too.

A few words from "Captain Crunch" would, no doubt, be welcome.

GIT-R-DONE

Comedian and actor Larry the Cable Guy spoke to the Cornhuskers and had them laughing following a practice in training camp and became something of a regular at Memorial Stadium. Turns out, Larry the Cable Guy — Dan Whitney — is coach Bill Callahan's neighbor and a long-time Nebraska football fan. Whitney, who is from Pawnee City, Neb., has a skybox in the new north stadium section.

His favorite Cornhusker, all-time, is Phil Ellis, a linebacker and co-captain in 1995.

Humor can "take the edge off," Callahan said. "So we had him come in and give a few jokes to our team, and he ended up in the middle of the team breakdown."

"All in all, it was a pretty positive experience for our guys."



Larry the Cable Guy gets some laughs from the Huskers.

Football office secretaries Joni Duff, Teri Riggins, Linda Leupold and Sarah Boehler also attended practice that day, at Callahan's invitation, so that they could "see what we do out here."

Their presence also helped underscore a sense of family, said Callahan. "We really work hard to create a family atmosphere, and these gals are like these kids' moms away from home."

WELCOMING STUDENTS AND FANS

As was the case a year ago, the football team's final practice in training camp was conducted for university students. An estimated 4,200 students were on hand for the workout in half pads. At the end of practice, the students were invited to participate in a mock Tunnel Walk, following Cornhusker co-captains Adam Carriker, Zac Taylor and Brandon Rigoni, through lines formed by the rest of the team and coaches.

The Tunnel Walk, from the south end, "was pretty weak, actually," said Taylor. "I think we were the only three that ran out of there. But it was cool for the fans to get to experience that."

The previous day was Fan Day, an annual event with players and coaches signing autographs and posing for photos. More than 6,000 fans showed up. (Fan Day photos on Page 25) ■

QUICK HITS

KUDOS FOR KENNEDY

Offensive lineman Carl Nicks, a transfer from Hartnell Junior College, thought he was prepared physically to begin training camp at Nebraska. But "I'd have to say no one could prepare for this, no matter if you run 2 miles every day and you're hitting stairs every day and you're lifting weights," he said. "No one can prepare for it. The physical and mental aspects of the game are like no other."

Strength coach Dave Kennedy helped Nicks get through camp. "I love Coach Kennedy. He's a motivator," Nicks said. "He's a motivator. All the time when you're struggling out there, he says, 'The devil's telling you you're tired. Don't listen to him.' He's a good motivator. When you're down, he's always going to cheer you up, makes you want to go hard for him. I really like Coach K."



Dave Kennedy

COACH TODD

Dane Todd is "Coach Todd" to the running backs. He "can make us do whatever he wants us to do," sophomore I-back Cody Glenn said of the senior fullback. "Whatever he says goes."

For example, if a running back makes a mistake, such as fumbling or missing an assignment, Todd might call for push-ups or wind sprints — for everyone. "He'll make us all do it together. He'll get on us," said Glenn. "Whatever he makes us do, he'll get down and do it, too."

"If we're running, he'll be the first one up there and the first one across the line."

Todd might be tougher on him than position coach Randy Jordan.

Todd downplays his taking a leader's role. "We all know we need to do it," he said. "I'm just the one who says something about it, typically. Those guys remind me, too, to do something about it. It's all of us policing each other, making sure nobody goes too far astray."

Glenn isn't ready to discipline anyone just yet. When he's a senior, however, "I'll tell the freshmen and sophomores, 'You give me 20; you get on the line and run,'" he said.

SCALE OF 1-TO-10

Defensive end Barry Turner played as a true freshman last season. Not only that, he earned Freshman All-America recognition and was credited with six sacks to tie for the national lead among freshmen. He has improved with experience and a better understanding of the game. On a scale of 1-to-10, he's "a 1, most definitely," he said. "Every day I'm out here improving and getting better."

If he rates 1 on such a scale now, however, what did he rate last season? "Probably a point-5," he said. "So I'm making some progression. I want to strive for perfection. That's what I'm doing."

Last season, "honestly, I was just playing on natural ability. They let me out there, and I just did what I could do to help the team. That was about it," Turner said. "It was a big-time adjustment."

GOOD GUY GREG

Offensive guard Greg Austin has taken on a leadership role as a senior, and not just by setting an example. He's vocal as well. Some aren't comfortable saying things to teammates.

"That goes to interpersonal skills and getting along with people," said Austin. "Everybody on the team will tell you, 'Ain't nothing wrong with 'GA.' If you have a question, holler; I'm right here. If I can help you, I'll help you. If I can't, I'm going to try to get somebody who can. I'm never condescending. Unless they act bad to me, I don't have a reason to act bad toward them."

JORDAN'S VAULT

Running backs coach Randy Jordan has created what he calls "Jordan's Vault," a repository of video clips of outstanding play by Cornhusker running backs, and only running backs. "I don't let anybody else in there, brother," he said during training camp. Mention of his "vault" was a result of a touchdown run by junior college transfer Kenny Wilson against the top defense in a scrimmage.

"He kept fighting. That's the thing all our backs are doing," said Jordan, who claimed Wilson broke 10 tackles on the run. Defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove claimed eight.

"There's some discrepancy; I go for the higher number," Jordan said. "But he broke a lot of tackles. It was a great effort on his part, and also the offensive line. It was a sight to see."

The run was as impressive as any he had seen, including at the NFL level, he said.

Jordan's Vault isn't limited to long touchdown runs. He has "some 5- and 10-yard runs in there that were pretty spectacular," as well as some blocking efforts, pass-protection pickups.

Players earned yellow jerseys for outstanding efforts in practice during training camp, for offense, defense and special teams. Wilson wore the yellow jersey for offense the day after his run.

ANOTHER DEPARTURE

Nebraska's 2005 football recruiting class was ranked among the nation's best. But a high ranking doesn't ensure retention. Offensive lineman Brock Pasteur, a junior college transfer, left the program the first week of classes, reportedly transferring to Division I-AA Stephen F. Austin, where he would be eligible to play immediately. Six other members of the 2005 class are no longer at Nebraska: Harrison Beck, Leon Jackson, Rodney Picou, Robert Rands, Jeff Souder and Dontrell Moore.

ROARK REUNION

Craig Roark, a redshirted freshman from Ada, Okla., and a member of the 2005 recruiting class, has been joined at Nebraska by his brother, Chad, who transferred from Oklahoma and began practicing with the Cornhuskers the first week of university classes. Chad Roark, a 6-foot-2, 300-pound offensive lineman, graduated high school early and enrolled at Oklahoma mid-year and practiced with the Sooners in the spring, working some with the first line at center. Craig (6-2, 295) was moved to the defensive line in the spring, after coming to Nebraska as an offensive lineman.

SORRY, SOLD OUT

By mid-August no tickets remained for Husker volleyball matches at the 4,030-seat Coliseum. Nebraska's on-going sellout streak began in 2001 and will climb to 89 by season's end. Single-match tickets went on sale Aug. 3, with fans camping overnight in anticipation. Tickets for 11 of the 17 home matches were sold within three hours of the windows opening.

Nebraska was No. 1 in the preseason rankings. "Our fans continue to set the bar high for college volleyball," coach John Cook said.

And his program continues to set the bar high for academics. The Huskers recently were honored for their classroom accomplishments, earning the American Volleyball Coaches Association Team Academic Award for 2005-06. The award, established in the 1992-93 academic year, recognizes college and high school team for classroom excellence, by maintaining a minimum 3.30 grade-point average.

Nebraska's team GPA was 3.48, including 3.74 in the spring semester. Nebraska has received the award 11 times, the most by any NCAA Division I program.

OSBORNE TRIBUTE

Former players and assistant coaches discuss the qualities that made Tom Osborne a Hall of Fame football coach in the recently published *Heart of a Husker: Tom Osborne's Nebraska Legacy*. The book includes a foreword by Florida State coach Bobby Bowden and was compiled by Huskers Illustrated contributing editor Mike Babcock. "What you see is exactly what you've got, and it's better than what you expect," says Bowden. "That's the way I size him up as a human being."

Players and assistants across Osborne's 25 seasons as head coach are represented. The book includes players both familiar and not-so-familiar. "He wouldn't raise his voice much, and when he did raise his voice, he caught our attention fast," recalls Roger Craig. "He'd get mad, but he'd always keep his composure. He'd say, 'Dadgummit.' He'd never cuss, but he'd say, 'Dadgummit.'"

Former Osborne and Bob Devaney assistant John Melton suggested "Dadgummit" for the title. ■



John Cook

Looking Ahead

Former Arizona State quarterback's arrival commands preseason attention



Mike BABCOCK

himself.

Keller also was the topic of sports-page headlines, radio-television sportscasts, sports-talk radio and Internet message boards throughout the week, beginning with speculation about his transfer.

If Harrison Beck's surprise departure was the most reported, discussed and analyzed story during the Cornhuskers' preseason, Keller's arrival from Arizona State was a not-too-distant second.

Action photos of him in Sun Devils gear dominated the front sports pages of the Omaha and Lincoln newspapers on consecutive days. "Here comes Keller" one headline proclaimed in bold black type, stretching across the entire page. "Keller arrives at NU" shouted another.

Some recalled the transfers of Scott Frost and Vince Ferragamo, both from Pac-10 programs, though the Pac-10 didn't exist when Ferragamo played at California. Keller was in good company.

"It feels good to have this attention," he said after his first practice. "It's for all the right reasons, too. If I can step in and be a help, help this team win games, then that's how it should be."

Reporters had been waiting for him at the airport in Omaha as well as at Memorial Stadium when he arrived with associate athletic director Tim Cassidy to begin processing his transfer. In addition to enrolling for classes — the fall semester was underway — Keller had to sign scholarship papers.

He would have been a senior at Arizona State. He started seven games last season before being sidelined by a thumb injury. During a three-game stretch, beginning with a loss against No. 5-ranked LSU, he passed for a combined 1,235 yards and 12 touchdowns without an interception. He finished with 155-of-264 completions (58.7 percent) for 2,165 yards and 20 touchdowns, with nine interceptions.

At 6-foot-4 and 230 pounds, he has NFL size to go with an NFL arm. "My aspirations are to go on and play, get drafted as high as I can. It's been a dream of mine forever," he said.

"I think coming here gives me the best opportunity to do that. Coach Callahan and his offense are tremendous, tremendous tools for the future, and just the way they run things here."

His pro potential is such that he was asked if he was OK

with delaying draft eligibility for two seasons, the first as a redshirt as required by NCAA transfer rules. He was, he replied.

Just a week before, Arizona State coach Dirk Koetter had named him the starting quarterback. In an odd twist, however, after meeting with a group of Sun Devil players, Koetter rescinded that decision, handing the starting job to redshirted sophomore Rudy Carpenter, instead.

"I'm not going to say much about that situation," said Keller, who was engulfed by television cameras and audio recorders. "That situation was decided based on what they thought was best for their program, and that's all I could do with that. I could only control what I can control."

"What I could do was make the best of a new opportunity. And that's why I'm here."

Keller's dad Mike, who played for Bo Schembechler at Michigan, is a sports management consultant, so his involvement, no doubt, was a significant benefit in the decision to transfer. And Callahan acted quickly. As soon as Keller got his scholarship release, Nebraska contacted him.

"I think we're in a market now in college football where the turnover in quarterbacks in passing offenses changes; it all changes too rapidly," Callahan said. "It's very different. Guys are looking for opportunities to play, just like when we talked to Harrison (about his release). We respected his wishes, what he wanted to do. I didn't necessarily agree, but I do respect what he did. We have to move on, so we're always going to bring in the best players we can and try to create the best competition."

The week Beck left, junior college transfer Brian Hildebrand arrived. Now Keller will be in the mix to succeed Zac Taylor, who was brought in to provide competition for the departed Joe Dailey and Beck. And, of course, Josh Freeman figured in the plans until backing out on an oral commitment and going to Kansas State, from which three quarterbacks have left since Ron Prince became head coach.

Keller will have time to learn the system, and perhaps provide the scout team a proven quarterback. "He's a very willing individual," said Callahan. "He said, 'Coach, I'll do whatever you want me to do. I'll be more than happy to be on the scout team, help you guys out in any way, shape or form.'"

"It was great to hear him volunteer that type of attitude."

Oh, by the way, the opening game was just over a week away.

"That's the main thing right now," Callahan said. ■



Sam Keller will be available in 2007 after redshirting this year.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 25 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

Strength In Numbers

**Team concept helped Nebraska opponent
Nicholls State make I-AA playoffs last season**



**Curt
McKEEVER**

EVEN WITH THE PROLIFERATION of spread attacks in college football, most offensive coordinators will have you believe that what they're trying to achieve is a balance between the pass and the run.

Then, there's Nebraska's Sept. 9 opponent, Nicholls State. With their triple-option attack, the Colonels might have you checking to see if Barry Switzer is roaming the sidelines.

OK, so maybe the NCAA Division I-AA program doesn't have a Billy Sims-Thomas Lott pairing to send at Kevin Cosgrove's defense. But judging from last season's Southland Conference co-championship and playoff appearance, Nicholls State will give the Huskers more than just a unique look.

Last season, the Colonels averaged 364.8 yards rushing per game, which ranked them No. 2 in I-AA. Strangely enough, their individual leader had just 718 yards, a stark difference from national leader Georgia Southern, which had two players eclipse 1,400 yards.

Nicholls State relied on strength in numbers, as five players rushed for at least 435 yards, and eight toted the ball at least 20 times.

"At first, some of the guys don't like being subbed for because they are concerned about their stats," Nicholls State running backs coach Kent Keith told the Thibodaux (La.) Daily Comet. "But it is a team thing, and they buy into it. That's really why we made that playoff run last year, because we were healthy late in the year."

The Colonels reached the Division I-AA playoffs for the first time since 1996. Their achievement came four years after former coach Daryl Day implemented the triple option.

Actually, Daye went to that formation during the 2000 season, when an injury to the starting quarterback forced him to go to a freshman, Josh Son, who had run the triple option in high school.

The commitment to that alignment in 2001 came at a time when three quarterbacks at other Southland Conference schools were dominating the league with their passing skills. All three — Josh McCown of Sam Houston State, Wes Pate of Stephen F. Austin, and Craig Nall of Northwestern State — would end up being NFL draftees.

But Jay Thomas — a former Nicholls State assistant with a background coaching defense who was named the school's coach after the 2003 season — stuck to Day's plan, and it's paid big dividends. Last year, the Colonels won their first Southland title (sharing it with Texas State) and finished the season ranked No. 16 in Division I-AA. They've been included in many of the preseason publication listings, being touted as high as No. 22. And it's primarily because of their offense.

Consider that three of Nicholls' top five rushers last season are no longer on the team. Quarterback Yale Vannoy and running back Anthony Harris graduated, while Joseph Tobias was declared academically ineligible. Tobias' departure could leave the biggest hole, as he rushed for a team-high 718 yards, while being honored as the Southland Conference and all-Louisiana Newcomer of the Year.

No doubt, Tobias will be missed, and the Colonels' offense will be run by first-time starting sophomore quarterback Vince Montgomery. But they'll have plenty of experienced backs, and three returning starters on the line who were named preseason all-conference.

"It's a team concept," said junior fullback Broderick Cole. "It's a team goal first of all, and what you get (after that) is just extra."

Last season, the 5-foot-10, 235-pound Cole rushed for 717 yards and established a single-season record by scoring 13 touchdowns. That warranted his being named all-league and, entering this year, a tab by the Sports Network as a second-team All-American.

"When I came into this offense, at first it was a little difficult to get used to being in one play then out the next," Cole said. "But you just have to realize they are doing that for you because you take a pounding."

Besides Cole, the Colonels will look to sophomore running back Zach Morgan, an honorable mention all-conference pick last year after rushing for 435 yards and a team-best 7.6 yards per carry, and Mike McClendon. Last year, McClendon, who's clocked a 10.3-second time in the 100 meters, led Pearl River Community College to the Mississippi State juco championship.

"A couple of things that we want to do, obviously, is create that competition with every position and just keep guys competing as hard as they can to earn playing time, earn starting time, earn practice time," Thomas said.

Nicholls State, which will be paid \$350,000 for its game with Nebraska, opened the season against NCAA Division II Southern Arkansas. That means the Colonels should come to Lincoln brimming with confidence.

Who knows whether that will matter? For any program, a contest against the Huskers is a tall task. Regardless, Nicholls State will enter under the radar and possessing a now-rare offensive set that's capable of forcing any team to adjust.

Just ask Indiana, which in the slot on last year's schedule gave up 408 rushing yards to the Colonels while having to produce a come-from-behind, 35-31 victory. ■



**Jay Thomas is in his
third season as head
coach.**

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams. He can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

The Cupboard

Jennings' recruiting efforts provided Devaney with the wherewithal to immediately turn around the program

**Second
in a Series**

By Mike Babcock

Football recruiting has long been newsworthy in Nebraska. For example, Monte Kiffin's decision to become a Cornhusker earned a bold headline in the May 20, 1958, edition of the Lincoln Journal.

"Lexington's Kiffin Chooses Nebraska Over Oklahoma," it proclaimed.

Kiffin was the fourth player from Lexington (Neb.) High School's 1957 team to commit to the Cornhuskers. The others were Mick Tingelhoff, Dallas Dyer and Steve Smith.

They didn't sign letters of intent. All they gave was their word.

Kiffin, a high school All-America tackle, was "the subject of an intense recruiting battle" involving Nebraska coach Bill Jennings and Oklahoma coach Bud Wilkinson, the story said.

Kiffin also had scholarship offers from Colorado, Kansas and two unnamed Big Ten schools. The source of that information wasn't a recruiting service. Rather, it was Jennings.

The veteran defensive coordinator for the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers was a multi-sport athlete in high school, earning all-state honors in football and basketball twice as well as competing in track and field. And his recruitment was more than just



Bill Jennings served five years as head coach. His record at Nebraska was 15-34-1, including 3-6-1 in 1961, his final season.

intense, it became downright nasty.

To understand why requires some background.

Jennings was from Norman, Okla., and played end for Oklahoma from 1938 to 1940. He also served as an assistant to Wilkinson, coaching the backfield and coordinating recruiting from 1947 to 1953. He resigned following the 1953 season to take a job

with an oil company in Fort Worth, Texas.

In 1954, as a result of investigations into an illegal recruiting fund, the NCAA placed Oklahoma on indefinite probation. The departed Jennings was made a scapegoat. When criticized by the University of Oklahoma president six years later, Jennings denied the responsibility was his alone.

"If I'm the only one that knew about it, why don't they go ahead and reveal the books on it? It would only affect me," he told the Lincoln Journal in mid-January of 1960.

Jennings had become the Cornhuskers' head coach in 1957, after serving as an assistant to Pete Elliott, who left for the University of California after one losing season.

In any case, Jennings also denied turning in the Sooners and indicated that he had been a "reluctant witness" when interviewed by the NCAA. He had talked to Wilkinson prior to his meeting with the NCAA, he said, and he hadn't lied but he hadn't volunteered any information, either.

The subject was resurrected as a result of Kiffin's recruitment, with Jennings claiming that Wilkinson had gone back on his word about not pursuing Kiffin unless he indicated he wasn't interested in Nebraska. Wilkinson visited Kiffin in Lexington the week before he announced his decision.

At the same time, Oklahoma claimed Nebraska had illegally recruited a football player in Wichita, Kan. If that were so, Jennings said, the

I Wasn't Bare

"At first it was (difficult), but when we had a chance to meet Coach Devaney, he was such a positive speaker, as it were, that he would just win you over to his way of thinking."

— **Bob Brown,**
on the transition
from Bill Jennings
to Bob Devaney



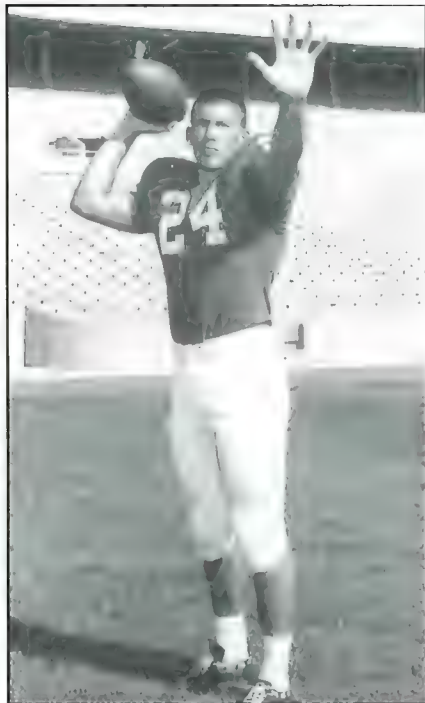
All-American Bob Brown, whom Bob Devaney described as the best two-way player he ever coached, came to Nebraska not because of Bill Jennings but rather because of Brown's father.

Sooners should take their charges and evidence to the NCAA. Instead, Oklahoma presented its allegations to

Nebraska's faculty representative.

The situation had been aggravated in 1959 when the Cornhuskers ended

Oklahoma's 74-game conference unbeaten streak with a 25-21 upset in Lincoln. "This is a pretty tough



Quarterback Dennis Claridge came to Nebraska from Minnesota.

game," Jennings told the Journal. "I recruited hard for Oklahoma and now I'm recruiting hard for Nebraska."

Jennings recruited hard, and he recruited well, for both schools. Even though his record in five seasons at Nebraska was 15-34-1, his recruiting efforts provided Bob Devaney with the wherewithal to immediately turn around the program. Devaney's first team in 1962 went 9-2, with players Jennings left behind — freshmen couldn't compete for varsity teams, so Devaney's first recruiting class couldn't contribute until 1963. That team went 10-1 and won the Big Eight championship, with players primarily recruited by Jennings, including Dennis Claridge and All-American Bob Brown.

The recruitment of Claridge also

had an element of intrigue and produced such ill will with Minnesota that the Golden Gophers announced that they would no longer schedule Nebraska.

Claridge, a stellar high school quarterback in suburban Minneapolis (Robbinsdale), had planned to go to Colorado, but the Buffaloes backed off and didn't offer a scholarship, leaving Nebraska as his second choice. He got as far as the airport, for a flight to Lincoln, before changing his mind. He then contacted Minnesota and told coach Murray Warmath he wanted to stay close to home.

Classes hadn't started at Minnesota when Nebraska played the Gophers in Minneapolis in the second game of the 1959 season. Claridge was in the stands with the other Minnesota freshmen recruits, watching a 32-12 Cornhusker victory and listening to Dick Strutz, a Nebraska freshman from Minnesota.

Claridge knew Strutz from having played in a Minnesota high school all-star game.

Strutz convinced him that Nebraska offered a better opportunity for a quarterback, and before the day was done, he had changed his mind again. His dad asked Jennings if the scholarship offer still stood. A surprised Jennings said it did. So instead of moving into a dorm room at Minnesota the next day, Claridge drove to Nebraska, where he would direct Devaney's first two teams.

Years later, Claridge said his decision to go to Nebraska was "the best thing that ever happened to me." And "I'll always love Bill Jennings. Nobody can ever say anything bad about him to me."

Brown, whom Devaney described as the best two-way player he ever coached, came to Nebraska not because of Jennings but rather because of his father, in the kind of curious twist of fate no recruiter can anticipate. "It's kind of a long, convoluted story," Brown has said.

The short version is this. Even though he was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, he wanted to attend UCLA. "I'm 17-years old," he said. "They used to break the huddle; it was called a 'serpentine' break, and boy, I really loved that. That was the selling point, believe it or not."

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He would have played for the Bruins except that his older brother, Ulysses, had gone to Northwestern to play and hadn't done well academically. "He bombed out," said Brown.

So "my dad came to me and he said, 'Wherever you go to school, they're going to have to take you and your brother. Nebraska was kind enough, generous enough to do that.'"

Some 40 years later, Brown had little recollection of Jennings, other than he "was a nice man. His program didn't fare too well, so he was terminated at some point," Brown said. "I don't know if we were sophomores or if I ever played for him. I can't remember. It's been so many years."

He, Claridge and Kiffin played for Jennings as sophomores in 1961. (Back problems delayed Kiffin's college career so that he was a sophomore the season Tingelhoff and Dyer were seniors.)

Devaney arrived from Wyoming the next season. The transition was relatively smooth. "Players have a tendency to make a big deal out of things they have nothing to do with and can't affect," said Brown. "At first it was (difficult), but when we had a chance to meet Coach Devaney, he was such a positive speaker, as it were, that he would just win you over to his way of thinking."

"He had won at Wyoming, so we were optimistic about that. He was a great teacher and tremendous tactician. So it didn't take long before we embraced his program."

In addition to Brown, Claridge and Kiffin, Jennings left Devaney with All-America tackle Larry Kramer (Austin, Minn.), John Kirby (David City, Neb.), Lyle Sittler (Crete, Neb.), Rudy Johnson (Aransas Pass, Texas), Willie Ross (Helena, Ark.), Lloyd Voss (Magnolia, Minn.), Kent McCloughan (Broken Bow), Bill Thornton (Toledo, Ohio), Dennis Steuwe (Hamburg, Minn.), Warren Powers (Kansas City, Mo.), Tyrone Robertson (Toledo, Ohio) and Dwain Carlson (Fullerton, Neb.).

The biggest recruiting failure during his tenure was probably allowing Omaha's Gale Sayers to get away to Kansas. There were many, many more who contributed to the dramatic turnaround, brought to Nebraska by Jennings, whose departure probably was hastened by remarks he made to

boosters in Omaha a year before he was fired following a 3-6-1 record with the players mentioned here.

"I don't think this state can ever be great in anything; there are so few people in the state. Our football team is about as good as anything else we're trying to do in this area," he said.

Jennings also said the ego of the state couldn't be fed with the football team.

Devaney would prove otherwise, beginning with players Jennings had recruited. ■

Bob Devaney took over in 1962. His first Nebraska team finished 9-2 and tied for third in the Big Eight at 5-2.



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'Great Feeling'

Husker sophomore offensive lineman Huff went out and achieved his dream

By Terry Douglass

Mike Huff was bred to be a Cornhusker. For as long as he can remember, Huff's goal was to play football for Nebraska. As a youngster, his parents, Michael and Christine, would dress him up in Husker outfits and take him to Big Red Football games.

As he got older, Huff's goal to play at Nebraska became so consuming that it wasn't until sometime last year — his redshirt freshman season with NU — that he was struck by the realization that he had achieved his life-long dream.

"It's really fulfilling to know that I went out and I achieved my dream," Huff said. "I think I was always pretty confident that I could get here because I had the right coaches in high school to get me on the right track and just the right connections, but it really is a great feeling for me."

Perhaps an even greater feeling for Huff is the progress he's made in the past year. A seldom-used backup behind Brandon Koch at right guard last season, the 6-foot-4, 305-pound Huff has thrust himself into contention for a starting spot this season.

"I'm definitely a lot more confident," Huff said. "My knowledge of the system is a year better than last year.

#61 MIKE HUFF
SOPHOMORE GUARD

Being in the system for going on three years now, has really boosted my confidence. My knowledge of the game has really increased with that, too.

"I get to go out on the field now, and I know my assignments. I'm confident in my assignments, so I can play at 100 percent and not really think about it."

Coach Bill Callahan has certainly been impressed with Huff's progress.

"I love that guy — just because of everything he's done and where he's come from," Callahan said of Huff. "He's really elevated his game, especially in pass protection, and he's still getting better.

"He'll have a bad snap here and there like anybody does, but Mike has become a more consistent player and a more physical player."

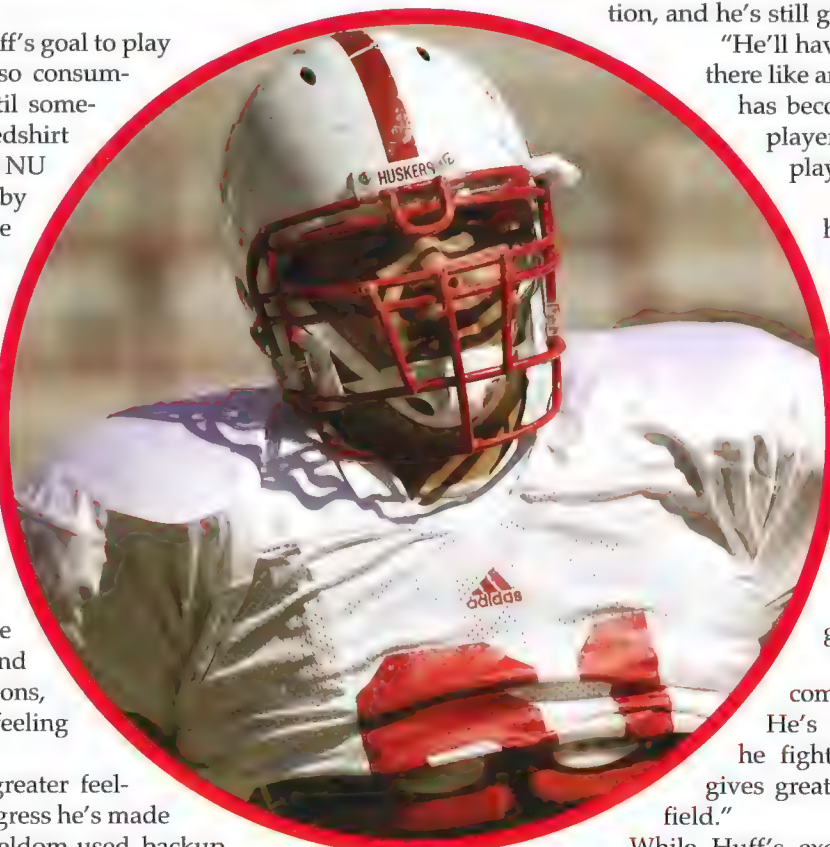
Callahan said Huff has also developed into a more cerebral player.

"He understands the big picture, and it's just great to see a kid like him come along and do the things that he's doing," Callahan said. "We feel very confident in his abilities to play the right guard position.

"He's really got a competitive edge to him. He's a competitive guy — he fights, he battles, and he gives great effort on the practice field."

While Huff's execution and increased knowledge of the offense has definitely played a big role, he partially credits his ascent toward the top of the depth chart to his dedication and hustle.

"I've just kept on plugging away and kept on listening to what the coaches have to tell me and just really hone in



Scott Bruhn

and focus on my techniques and my assignments," said Huff, who makes it his goal to never miss a practice session or even a practice snap. "I know that my time is limited playing football. I just really take that to heart and make sure I can make it to practice and be there for every snap.

"It has always been that way for me, ever since I was in high school. I love the game of football, and I wouldn't be here if I didn't."

Huff was a four-year starter on the offensive line at Ralston High School, earning first-team Class B all-state honors from the Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln Journal Star as a senior. His dedication was evident from an early age as he was selected as the Rams' Lifter of the Year in each of his last three years of high school.

Huff was recruited out of high school by former Nebraska coach Frank Solich and NU's offensive line coach at the time, Barney Cotton. Although Huff also received recruiting interest from such schools as Colorado State, Iowa and Kansas State, he surprised no one who knew him when he accepted a scholarship

offer from the Huskers.

When the coaching change was announced in late November of 2003, Huff suffered through several anxious days, wondering if his dream of playing for the Huskers might be derailed. However, his fears were calmed after a meeting with Callahan and offensive line coach Dennis Wagner.

"Coach Callahan and coach Wagner really sat down with me and made sure that I was reassured that I would fit the system and that if they had it their way, they'd still recruit me," said Huff, who was the first Ralston player to receive a football scholarship from Nebraska since Brad Johnson in 1982. "That really gave me a sense of comfort. I was really excited when they sat down and told me that."

Huff has come to discover that he is indeed a good fit in Nebraska's West Coast offense. He's made it his goal this season to help the Huskers' offensive line regain its reputation as one of the country's best units.

"A lot of people think for the last couple of years that the offensive line

at Nebraska has lost its tradition and all that stuff," Huff said. "I think we're really trying to focus on getting all that back and really getting our reputation back on the offensive line."

"It is a little bit hard just because of the pride thing, but we know that it's a new system and we knew it was going to take time to learn it," Huff said. "It's just a learning experience right now."

Although Nebraska's line struggled at times last season — the Huskers were 107th nationally in rushing offense (96 yards per game) and allowed 38 sacks — Huff said he truly believes this year's group has the potential to show dramatic improvement up front.

"We definitely have the tools and the talent on the line to be a dominating unit," Huff said. "We come out every year wanting to be a dominating unit, but I think everyone on the team could tell you this: There's a feeling in the air." ■

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the *Grand Island (Neb.) Independent*. He can be reached at terry.douglass@charter.net.

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NEBRASKA



10 QUESTIONS

with

NEWT LINGENFELTER

6-5/280 Sr. Offensive Lineman

Plainview, Neb.

Older folks in Lincoln occasionally recognize the name. They remember back when. So they'll ask Newt Lingenfelter if he's from Plainview, and then they'll ask if, by chance, he knows Bob Lingenfelter. As a matter of fact he does, Newt will tell them. "I happen to be his boy."

So they'll ask how his dad is doing and they'll ask if, like his dad, he plays football. "It's kind of funny how this community hasn't really changed all that much in 30 years," Newt said.

In many ways, Lincoln has changed dramatically, of course. But its passion for the Cornhuskers hasn't diminished. Bob Lingenfelter has told his son how it was in the 1970s.

Bob was a three-year letterman (1974-76), a member of Bob Devaney's final recruiting class and a redshirt in Tom Osborne's first season as head coach. And he saw, first-hand, the turmoil during the coaching transition, just as there was turmoil in the transition to Bill Callahan.

"I don't want to say anything bad about past teams or people, but the team I'm on now sounds more like the teams that Dad was on," said Newt, who came to Nebraska as a walk-on and earned a scholarship following spring practice in 2005. "It sounds like we're close like they were."

"This is what I heard it to be all about when I was younger."

His dad's teams were close, "really unified," he said.

"It might have been because of the controversy and turmoil they went through, but I hope that can happen with our group, that we'll stay close throughout the years."

Not everything is the same, however. His dad tells him and his brother Harrison, who is playing football at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, "how tough they were and how strong they were, how much hotter and longer everything was in two-a-days," Newt said. "He likes to tell stories."

"Sometimes, you hear them over and over and over again."

Despite the demands of football, Newt has maintained his classroom focus, too. He has a 3.163 grade-point average in a mechanized systems management major and is on schedule to complete a degree in December. He has made the Big 12 Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll six times.

If you could eat only one thing for the next month, what would it be?

"I'm really partial to prime rib. They serve it (at the training table) probably at least two, maybe three times a week. I'd pick it every night, especially if I can get the end cut."

What's your favorite television show?

"I don't watch much TV, but when I do sit down and watch it, 'Family Guy.'"

If your life were made into a movie, who would play the part of you?

"Well, I'm probably too humble to say John Wayne. But that's who I'd like to have. He was a football player, and from Iowa, just across the border there. If he was still around, maybe he'd play it."

If you could play one sport other than football at the collegiate level, what sport would it be?

"Probably baseball. I played in high school, Legion. I played



first base and pitched a little earlier."

What's the most impressive thing about Plainview?

"Gee, the last time I brought somebody to town I can't remember what they were impressed by. We catch a lot of slack for being the 'clown town.' We've got the clown museum* right there. But if somebody came with me, that's definitely not the first thing they would see. We've got an ethanol plant that just came to town and a pretty big industry that makes side dump trailers. That's kind of impressive for a small town. The side dump plant is 24 hours. They run a night shift, too. And the ethanol plant's going all the time, so I guess that's kind of impressive considering the size of the town."

Who's the funniest guy on the team, other than Barry Cryer?

"'CP' can make people laugh, Chris Patrick. He's funny. It's the way he says things. It's not what he says."

If you were on Star Search, what would your talent be?

"I don't dance very well. I was in swing choir. I played the trumpet; I wasn't very good at that either. So probably singing, country and western music if they'd let me, anything though. I like oldies."

What's the most difficult class you've taken at Nebraska?

"Biology 101 my first semester. It was a weed-out class. They said 70 percent of us were going to fail, and I think 70 percent probably did. I made it through, barely."

If you could meet and spend 30 minutes with any celebrity, in sports or otherwise, who would it be and what would you say to them?

"I haven't really thought about that. I wouldn't mind meeting ... I don't know. It wouldn't be a sports figure. I'm not really talkative. I don't know if I would get very many words out if I talked to anybody."

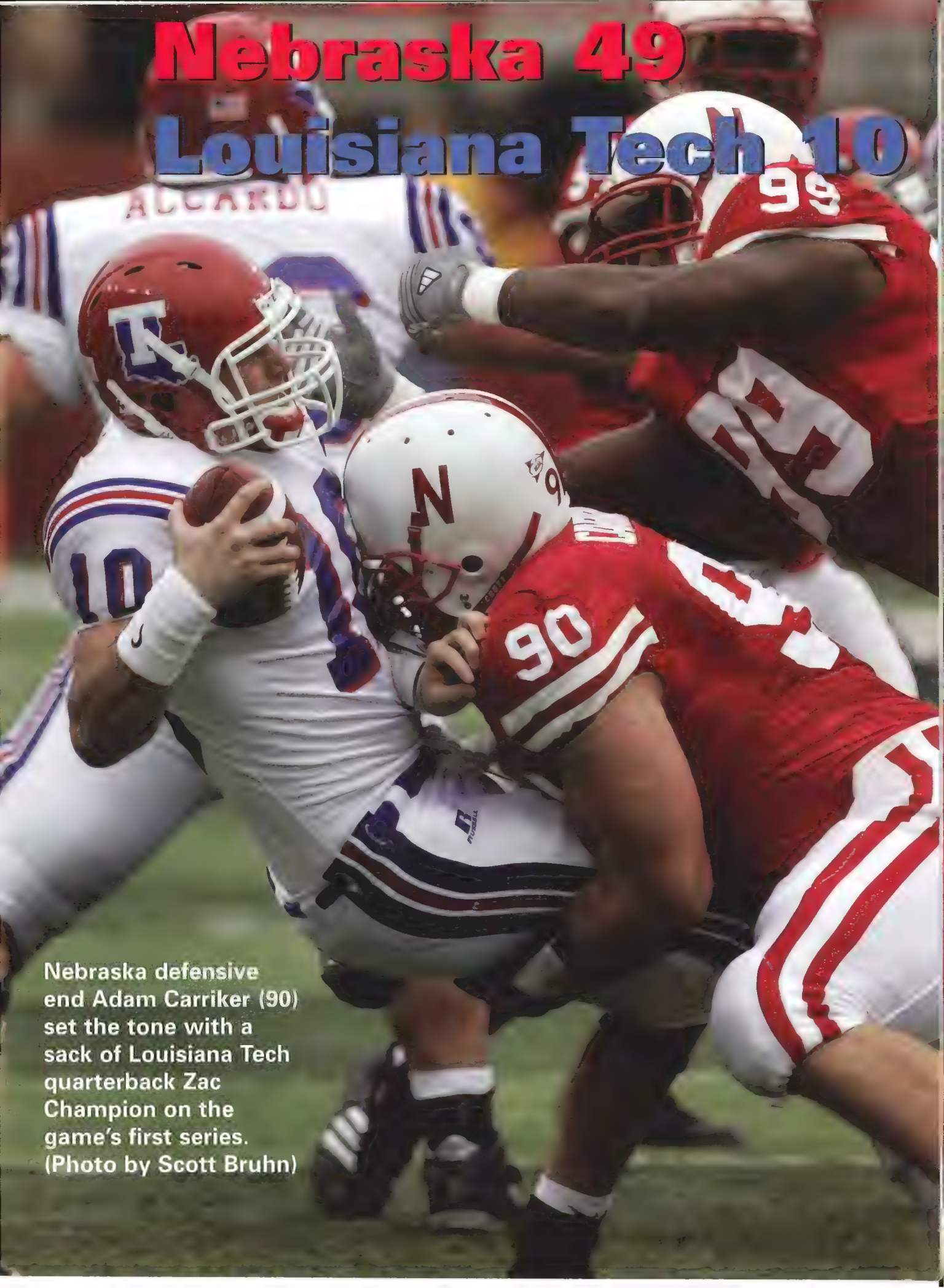
If you started a band, what would you name it and what would you play?

"I'd play old stuff, both country and rock, but older style music. I haven't thought about a name. Oh yeh, we did think about this once, a group of guys from back home. We were the Unselsingfish, the last names of the guys who were going to do it. This was just a one-night deal this last summer."

(*Plainview is home to the Klown Museum and Klown Festival) ■

Nebraska 49

Louisiana Tech 10



Nebraska defensive end Adam Carriker (90) set the tone with a sack of Louisiana Tech quarterback Zac Champion on the game's first series. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)

Welcome

Herian returns as one of four tight ends to find end zone

By Mike Babcock
Photos: Scott Bruhn

His first catch went for a touchdown. But the second might have been more telling. Near the end of the first half of Nebraska's 49-10 victory against Louisiana Tech, Matt Herian caught Zac Taylor's third-and-6 toss, faked safety Mark Dillard to the ground and gained 17 yards before being tackled.

"It's been a while since I've been in a game situation like that and taken a hit like that," the soft-spoken Herian said later. "I didn't know how I'd react after it happened."

He reacted by popping "right back up."

Welcome back Matt. "Everybody who's asking me if I'm OK, if I'm ready to play, it kind of answers their questions," the senior tight end from Pierce, Neb., said.

Herian last caught a pass in a game on Oct. 30, 2004, against Missouri. He also suffered a compound leg fracture that sidelined him for the final three games that season, and all of last season.

He had three receptions for 61 yards against the Bulldogs, the first a 13-yarder for Nebraska's first touchdown. There was no contact on that play, however. He was wide open in the end zone.

He and Terrence Nunn "had a little 'switch route' there," said Herian. "I saw he had one guy covering him, and there was nobody else. When I



Senior tight end Matt Herian (arms raised) is congratulated by his teammates after his touchdown catch in the first quarter.

made my move, I knew I was going to take him with me and have Terrence wide open or he was going to stick with Terrence, and I was going to be wide open."

Damned if you do. Damned if you don't. The defender stuck with Nunn. The touchdown was the 11th of Herian's career. He caught a third pass, for a 31-yard gain, early in the

Back



third quarter to surpass Tracey Wistrom in career-receiving yards by a Nebraska tight end.

Herian wasn't the only tight end to reach the end zone against Louisiana Tech. J.B. Phillips caught a 6-yard

WORTH REPLAYING

touchdown pass from Taylor in the third quarter. Josh Mueller caught a 6-yarder for a score in the fourth quarter, and Hunter Teafatiller caught a 29-yard touchdown pass from Joe Ganz to complete the scoring. Last season, Cornhusker tight ends caught no touchdown passes, zero.

Coach Bill Callahan complimented all of the tight ends, and Herian in particular.

"Going through all the things he went through in his rehabilitation, the frustration and the setbacks that he had and his ability to persevere and overcome those setbacks paid off today," Callahan said. "I couldn't be more pleased for a guy that Matt Herian."

RUNNING BY COMMITTEE

Callahan was non-committal. When the depth chart was released on Tuesday, the running backs were separated by slashes: Marlon Lucky/Cody Glenn and Brandon Jackson/Kenny Wilson. He hadn't had room enough to list all four on the same line, Callahan said. Otherwise, he would have.

The plan was to use four running backs against Louisiana Tech, rotate to keep all of them fresh. And the plan appeared to work. "I'm glad to see that come to fruition today," said Callahan. "I really believe they all have equal ability. We've got to play to each of their strengths."

Lucky started, carrying on the first play from scrimmage and gaining 3 yards, despite losing his balance. But the other three got on the field before the first quarter was finished.

Glenn finished as the leading rusher, with 88 yards and a touchdown. Lucky gained 79 yards and scored a touchdown, and Wilson got the most

REPORT CARD

RUSHING OFFENSE

There's always room for improvement, eliminating fumbles, for example. But Callahan certainly would take a 5.2-yards-per-carry average, especially after the Cornhuskers averaged 2.7 yards per carry last season and ranked 107th in the nation in rushing offense. ★★★★★

PASSING OFFENSE

No one can complain when Zac Taylor completes 67 percent of his passes for 287 yards and three touchdowns, even if one of his 33 passes was intercepted. Fullback Dane Todd was open in the flat on the interception, Callahan said. "I know he was trying to pull the trigger and he just held it a little bit." The ball also was deflected. Ten different receivers caught passes. ★★★★★

RUSHING DEFENSE

Louisiana Tech broke runs of 19 and 15 yards and that's about it. The Bulldogs couldn't establish a consistent ground game against the Blackshirts. ★★★★★

PASSING DEFENSE

Considering it was his first collegiate start, the Bulldogs' Zac Champion held up reasonably well. But his only touchdown pass required a remarkable, one-handed catch by Johnathan Holland. The Cornhusker secondary held up well, even with injuries to cornerbacks Cortney Grixby and Isaiah Fluellen on consecutive plays in the second quarter. ★★★★★

SPECIAL TEAMS

Young players and newcomers to special teams had a baptism under fire. There's room for improvement, according to Callahan. But it was a good start. ★★★★★

NEBRASKA-LOUISIANA TECH NOTES

BIG 12 BIG

Nebraska coach Bill Callahan has talked about how the Cornhuskers are looking more and more like a Big 12 team, physically. And Louisiana Tech coach Jack Bicknell apparently agrees. "I don't know if it was just me, but they seemed to be very big, just big guys. Everybody seemed to be big, big tight ends, big linemen and big receivers. I think they obviously have some talent there."

NEW BLACKSHIRTS

Tackle Barry Cryer was among five players who received Blackshirts for the first time on the Tuesday before the game. The others were cornerback Andre Jones, end Barry Turner and safeties Andrew Shanle and Brandon Rigoni. Cryer struggled to find words to express the emotion.

"It felt like . . . whew . . . man . . . it felt different," he said. "It felt like I'm getting counted on now, like I'm part of something. It was a real big deal. I knew about the Blackshirts, growing up, watching Nebraska throwing up the bones and all of that, but I didn't know it was a big deal like it is. They let us know how everybody else, the players before us felt about it. It was incredible."

Cryer's name was the first one called. "It was like a lot of weight off my shoulders, like, 'Whew, I finally got this thing. I've got to keep it,' " the senior from Marrero, La., said.

He and Ola Dagunduro were "pretty much sure we were going to get them. There was never a worry or nothing like that, but we know we've got to do what we've got to do to keep them," he said.

He had yet to look at himself in a mirror with the Blackshirt, Cryer said after Wednesday's practice. "I'm trying to see a picture on Rivals to see how it looks. I felt like Superman or something. The first day I got it, I thought I was Superman. I don't know; it just felt like I can't be blocked in that thing."

TRUE FRESHMEN

Nebraska used 67 players, according to the participation chart, including four true freshmen: safeties Rickey Thenarse and Major Culbert, wide receiver Menelik Holt and offensive lineman Jacob Hickman, who grayshirted and went through spring practice, after going on scholarship in January.

"We had a lot of guys play. It was great to have that happen," Callahan said.

STRANGE SIGHT

The coach was familiar, but not on the opposing side. George Darlington, a Cornhusker assistant for 30 years, is Louisiana Tech's defensive coordinator and secondary coach. The 67-year-old Darlington, who was at Marshall the past three seasons, was hired to coach the Bulldog defensive backs. When his predecessor left for Northwestern, however, he was promoted to defensive coordinator.

During three seasons at Marshall, Darlington served as recruiting coordinator in addition to coaching the outside linebackers, the safeties and special teams and then the secondary.

He was in the coaches' box, however, as he was while at Nebraska.

RECORD CROWD

A record crowd of 85,181 was on hand. No surprise here. With the expansion at the north end, Memorial Stadium's official seating capacity is 81,067, third-largest in the Big 12. Only Texas A&M's Kyle Field (82,600) and Oklahoma's Memorial Stadium (82,112) are larger. Memorial Stadium's previous capacity was 73,918. However, attendance figures include everyone in the stadium — teams, administrators, officials, media and workers — allowing for more-than-capacity crowds. The previous record crowd was 78,268 for the Nov. 2, 2002 game against Texas. The sellout was No. 276 in a row.

The 85,181 total also made the top 10 largest crowds ever to watch the Huskers, ranking fifth. The 2002 Penn State game at State College easily tops the all-time list, at 110,753.

RANKINGS RETURN

Nebraska went into the game with a No. 20 ranking in the Associated Press poll. The Cornhuskers weren't included in the AP preseason rankings the previous three years, after 33 consecutive appearances. Ohio State was No. 1, followed by Notre Dame, Texas and Auburn. Oklahoma (No. 10) and Texas Tech (No. 25) were the only other Big 12 schools in the poll. Nebraska was No. 22 in the coaches' poll.

"The only spot I'm worried about is where we are at the end of the season," senior defensive end Jay Moore said. "It's early. I'm not worried about it now."

BRIEFLY

- Nebraska's 584 yards of total offense were the most since 2002, when the Cornhuskers rolled up 595 yards against McNeese State.

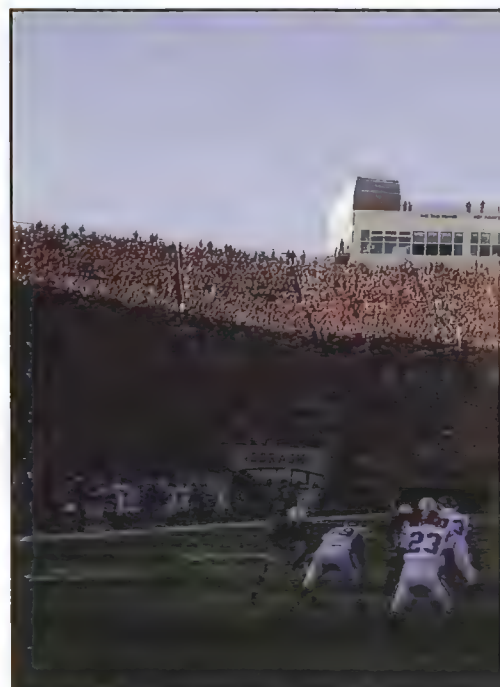
- The last time the Cornhuskers rushed for at least 250 yards and threw for at least 250 yards in the same game was in 1996, against Kansas.

- Senior offensive guard Greg Austin was a game captain, joining all-season captains Adam Carriker, Zac Taylor and Brandon Rigoni for the coin toss.

- Louisiana Tech wide receiver Johnathan Holland on his one-handed touchdown catch: "It was an amazing catch. Once I caught it, I was like, 'Dang, I caught this like that?'" ■



Sophomore I-back Marlon Lucky scores his first career touchdown in the third quarter. He finished with 13 carries for 79 yards.



With the expansion of the north stadium, a record crowd of 85,181 was on hand.



...er touchdown on a 13-yard run in the second

carries, with 15, gaining 47 yards. Jackson had the fewest carries but the longest run, 25 yards for a touchdown midway through the fourth quarter.

"I thought we had them pretty worn out by that time," Callahan said of the Bulldogs. "But nonetheless, I thought it was an excellent, excellent effort on that particular pitch play."

For now, apparently, the running back committee will remain in place.

"All of those guys brought a little bit something different," said Callahan. "Overall, I thought we ran physically. We're running harder. We're getting up and down." ■

NUMBERS

Nebraska emphasized the running game in the spring and again in training camp. The emphasis paid off as the Cornhuskers averaged 5.2 yards per carry and produced their

252

highest single-game rushing total since the Missouri game in 2004. Their best rushing effort last season was 182 yards against Baylor. The 252 yards were the fourth-most in Bill Callahan's three seasons as coach.



crowd of 85,181 watched the opener. The project included skyboxes and the huge new scoreboard.

WHO STOOD OUT?

OFFENSE



Zac Taylor

Zac Taylor showed a veteran's maturity. "I thought his third-down execution was excellent. That was what really stood out in my mind," coach Bill Callahan said. "His accuracy improvement, his decision-making, his ability to see the field, I thought they were all excellent."

DEFENSE



Jay Moore

Ends Adam Carriker and Jay Moore set the tone, recording sacks on Louisiana Tech's first two possessions, Carriker's for a 7-yard loss, Moore's for a 10-yard loss. In addition, Barry Turner "came alive on a few nickel rushes" in the second half, said Callahan. "Those were the guys that stood out in my mind."

SPECIAL TEAMS



Dan Titchener

Sophomore Dan Titchener and true freshman Michael Such, both walk-ons, emerged in competition to replace Sam Koch as the punter. Titchener earned the start and responded by averaging 42.3 yards on three punts, including a 53-yarder.

INJURY REPORT

Cornerback Isaiah Fluellen and linebacker Phillip Dillard left the game with knee injuries, the extent of which would be determined by MRIs, coach Bill Callahan said. Cornerback Cortney Grixby also left the game with a shoulder stinger but was able to return.

Grixby and Fluellen, who was moved from wide receiver in training camp, left the field on consecutive plays in the second quarter. "So just like that we're down two corners and we're scrambling," Callahan said. Not to worry, however. "We just made some adjustments at halftime."

GAME STATS

SCORING

Sept. 2, 2006
Memorial Stadium Lincoln, Neb.
Attendance 85181

	1	2	3	4	F
Louisiana Tech	0	10	0	0	10
Nebraska	7	14	7	21	49

First Quarter

	LT	NU
NU Herian Pass from Taylor 13-yards (Congdon Kick) 01:54	0	7
Drive: 8 plays 65 yds 3:22		

Second Quarter

	LT	NU
LT Horwedel 23-yard Field Goal 11:11	3	7
Drive: 12 plays 80 yds 5:33		

	LT	NU
NU Lucky 13-yard Run (Congdon Kick) 05:54	3	14
Drive: 12 plays 74 yds 5:10		

	LT	NU
LT Holland Pass from Champion 39-yards (Horwedel Kick) 02:36	10	14
Drive: 8 plays 67 yds 3:09		

	LT	NU
NU Glenn 1-yard Run (Congdon Kick) 00:07	10	21
Drive: 11 plays 78 yds 2:24		

Third Quarter

	LT	NU
NU Phillips Pass from Taylor 6-yards (Congdon Kick) 12:31	10	28
Drive: 6 plays 72 yds 2:25		

Fourth Quarter

	LT	NU
NU Mueller Pass from Taylor 6-yards (Congdon Kick) 11:56	10	35
Drive: 7 plays 67 yds 2:52		

	LT	NU
NU Jackson 25-yard Run (Congdon Kick) 07:49	10	42
Drive: 5 plays 64 yds 1:26		

	LT	NU
NU Teafatiller Pass from Ganz 29-yards (Congdon Kick) 03:14	10	49
Drive: 6 plays 49 yds 3:21		

TEAM STATS

	LT	NU
Total First Downs	13	30
Rushing	3	16
Passing	10	14
Penalty	0	0
Rushing Attempts	21	48
Yards Gained Rushing	89	267
Yards Lost Rushing	22	15
Net Yards Rushing	67	252
Net Yards Passing	238	332
Passes Attempted	32	36
Passes Completed	13	24
Had Intercepted	1	1
Percent Completion	40.6%	66.7%
Yards per Attempt	7.4	9.2
Yards per Completion	18.3	13.8
Total Offensive Plays	53	84
Total Net Yards	305	584
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.8	7.0
Fumbles: No-Lost	4-2	3-1
Penalties: No-Yards	5-25	5-45
Punts: No-Yards	7-224	3-127
Avg. Per Punt	32.0	42.3
Avg. Net Punt	30.7	37.0
Punt Returns: No-Yards	2-16	4-9
Kickoff Returns: No-Yards	8-141	1-14
Interception Returns: No-Yards	1-7	1-14
Fumble Returns: No-Yards	0-0	0-0
Miscellaneous Yards	0	0
Possession Time	24:55	35:05
Third-Down Conversions	5-14	11-16
Percentage	35.7%	68.8%
Fourth-Down Conversions	0-0	1-2
Percentage	0.0%	50.0%
Sacks By: No-Yards	0-0	2-17

22 SEPT. 9, 2006



NU defensive end Barry Turner (right) pressures Louisiana Tech quarterback Zac Champion.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

LOUISIANA TECH

	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Jackson	9	46	3	43	4.8	0	19
Franklin	6	35	0	35	5.8	0	15
Champion	6	8	19	-11	-1.8	0	4
Total	21	89	22	67	3.2	0	19

	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Champion	27	12	44.4	1	231	1	56
Mosley	5	1	20.0	0	7	0	7
Total	32	13	40.6	1	238	1	56

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Holland	7	139	1	39
Wheeler	2	69	0	56
Newman	1	16	0	16
Carroll	1	7	0	7
Franklin	1	7	0	7
Jackson	1	0	0	0
Total	13	238	1	56

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Franklin	2	16	0	13
Total	2	16	0	13

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Brown	4	85	0	29
Jackson	3	34	0	19
Riser	1	22	0	22
Total	8	141	0	29

	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In	20
Keagle	7	32.0	46	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	7	32.0	46	0	0	0	0	0	1

	Made	Att	Lg	Blkd
Horwedel	1	1	23	0
Total	1	1	23	0

	Solo	past	Tot	TFL	0-0	1	FF	FR
Baker	4	6	10	0-1	0-0	1	1	0
Harris	5	5	10	0-0	0-0	2	1	0
Jackson	1	7	8	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Beverage	1	6	7	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Crosby	4	3	7	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Collins	4	2	6	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
McBeath	0	5	5	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Abrams	1	3	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Dillard	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Moss	3	1	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Muse	1	3	4	0-2	0-0	0	0	0
Brown	2	1	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	1
Lowery	2	1	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Smith	1	2	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Day	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Hampton	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
Lubin	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Young	0	2	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Collins	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Holland	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Jackson	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
McGilton	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Spurgon	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Smith	1	7	0	7
Total	1	7	0	7

NEBRASKA

	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Glenn	13	88	0	88	6.8	1	18
Lucky	13	79	0	79	6.1	1	13
Wilson	15	55	8	47	3.1	0	9
Jackson	3	36	0	36	12.0	1	25
Taylor	2	9	0	9	4.5	0	8
TEAM	2	0	7	-7	-3.5	0	0
Total	48	267	15	252	5.2	3	25

	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Taylor	33	22	66.7	1	287	3	31
Ganz	3	2	66.7	0	45	1	29
Total	36	24	66.7	1	332	4	31

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Herian	3	61	1	31
Nunn	5	54	0	18
Swift	3	46	0	21
Lucky	3	42	0	19
Peterson	2	30	0	18
Teafatiller	1	29	1	29
Purify	1	28	0	28
Hardy	2	24	0	13
Mueller	2	10	1	6
Phillips	2	8	1	6
Total	24	332	4	31

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Nunn	3	10	0	12
Bradley	1	-1	0	0
Total	4	9	0	12

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Green	1	14	0	14
Total	1	14	0	14

	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In	20
Titchener	3	42.3	53	0	1	0	1	1	1
Total	3	42.3	53	0	1	0	1	1	1

	Solo	past	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
Grixby	5	1	6	0-0	0-0	1	1	1
Dillard	3	1	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Erickson	1	3	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Green	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
McKeon	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Shanle	2	2	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Bradley	2	1	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Carriker	1	2	3	1-7	1-7	0	0	0
O'Hanlon	0	3	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Eisenhart	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Moore	2	0	2	2-12	1-10	0	0	0
Octavien	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Turner	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	1
Brothers	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Dagunduro	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Jones	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Rigoni	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Steinkuhler	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Suh	0	1	1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0
Taylor	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Ruud	1	14	0	14
Total	1	14	0	14

2006 SCHEDULE

- 1 Sept. 2** Louisiana Tech (0-1), W 49-10 1-0
- 2 Sept. 9** Nicholls State (1-0), 12:30 p.m.
- 3 Sept. 16** @USC (1-0), 7 p.m., ABC
- 4 Sept. 23** Troy (1-0), TBA
- 5 Sept. 30** Kansas (1-0), TBA
- 6 Oct. 7** @Iowa State (1-0), TBA
- 7 Oct. 14** @Kansas State (1-0), TBA
- 8 Oct. 21** Texas (1-0), TBA
- 9 Oct. 28** @Oklahoma State (1-0), TBA
- 10 Nov. 4** Missouri (1-0), TBA (Homecoming)
- 11 Nov. 11** @Texas A&M (1-0), TBA
- 12 Nov. 24** Colorado (0-1), 2:30 p.m., ABC
- Dec. 2** Big 12 Championship
at Kansas City, Mo., 7 p.m., ABC

BIG 12 AT A GLANCE

Thursday, Aug. 31

Iowa State 45, Toledo 43 (ot)

Saturday, Sept. 2

Nebraska 49, Louisiana Tech 10
Texas 56, North Texas 7
Montana State 19, Colorado 20
Missouri 47, Murray State 7
Texas Tech 35, SMU 3
Kansas 49, Northwestern State 18
Oklahoma State 52, Missouri State 10
Oklahoma 24, UAB 17
Texas A&M 35, The Citadel 3
Kansas State 24, Illinois State 23

Sunday, Sept. 3

TCU at Baylor

Saturday, Sept. 9

Nicholls State at Nebraska
Mississippi at Missouri
Washington at Oklahoma
Colorado vs. Colorado State (Denver)
UL Monroe at Kansas
UL Lafayette at Texas A&M
UNLV at Iowa State
Northwestern State at Baylor
Oklahoma State at Arkansas State
Florida Atlantic at Kansas State
Ohio State at Texas
Texas Tech at UTEP

Friday, Sept. 15

Kansas at Toledo

GAME 2

Nicholls State

Sept. 9

Location: Thibodaux, La.

Enrollment: 6,677

2006 record: 1-0

Coach: Jay Thomas, third year

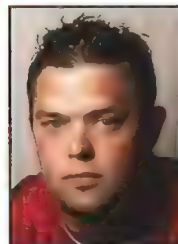
Series: First meeting

12:30 p.m. CDT

Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.



Colonel to Watch



Senior line-
backer **Cory Vavala** led Nicholls State in tackles last season with 85 and added one sack, four interceptions and three pass breakups.

The two-time All-Southland Conference selection finished strong with 43 tackles and three interceptions in the last five games.

Quick Facts

The defending Southland Conference champions cruised to a 35-0 victory over Southern Arkansas on Aug. 31 before a crowd of 6,735 at Guidry Stadium in Thibodaux, La.

Nicholls State, which ranked second in Division I-AA in rushing offense last year, had 195 of its 261 yards on the ground in the opener. The Colonels attempted just four passes, completing three.

Five Nicholls State players were selected to the Preseason All-Southland Conference team. Senior running back Joseph Tobias, junior fullback Broderick Cole, senior offensive lineman Jacob Bender and junior offensive lineman Ben Gombossy made the first-team offense, while senior linebacker Cory Vavala was named to the first-team defense.

ON DECK

At USC Sept. 16

Location: Los Angeles, Calif.

Enrollment: 32,000

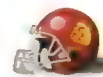
2006 record: 1-0

Coach: Pete Carroll, sixth year

Series: USC leads 1-0-1

7 p.m. CDT, ABC

Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum



TENTATIVE 2-DEEPS

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

WRX	87	Nate Swift*	6.2	198	20
	7	Frank Hardy*	6.1	180	20
	84	Chris Patrick*	6.1	290	20
	36	Lydon Muth*	6.1	315	20
LB	45	Greg Austin*	6.1	295	20
	62	Andy Christen*	6.0	302	20
	94	Kurt Mann*	6.4	290	20
	89	Brett Byrnes*	6.3	300	20
TE	21	Mike Huff*	6.4	305	20
	63	Jacob Hickman*	6.4	260	20
PI	75	Matt Blauson*	6.4	325	20
	77	Carl Nicks*	6.5	325	20
	78	Matt Herman*	6.5	245	20
	81	Joab Mueller**	6.5	255	20
QB	13	Terrence Nunn**	6.2	185	20
	11	Todd Peterson**	6.4	210	20
RB	18	Zac Taylor**	6.2	210	20
	7	Joe Ganz**	6.1	200	20
FB	41	Dane Tode**	6.1	235	20
	42	Matt Seneca**	6.1	225	20
	30	Marlon Lucky**	6.0	210	20
	34	Cody Glenn**	6.3	230	20
PK	25	Jordan Langdon*	6.1	175	20

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

DE	44	Jay Moore**	6.2	244	20
	39	Barry Turner*	6.3	250	20
LB	54	Olis Dapunduro*	6.2	300	20
	55	Ndamukong Suh*	6.4	295	20
	54	Barry Civer*	6.2	280	20
	43	Ty Steinkubler*	6.3	280	20
CB	40	Adam Cantik**	6.5	295	20
	94	Zach Porter*	6.5	280	20
SS	34	Stewart Bradley**	6.4	245	20
	40	Lance Brandenburg**	6.1	230	20
FS	13	Corey McKeon*	6.1	225	20
	62	Phillip Dillias**	6.1	215	20
WR	47	Mo Ruud**	6.2	235	20
	19	Breave Octavien**	6.0	210	20
TE	75	Andre Jones**	6.0	185	20
FB	23	Isaiah Pluett**	6.5	180	20
PK	30	Harre Green**	6.1	200	20
	5	Major Culbert**	6.0	200	20
	8	Andrew Shank**	6.1	210	20
WR	1	Rickey Thengren**	6.0	185	20
	12	Gortney Groves**	5.9	170	20
PK	10	Tyrell Spain**	5.3	190	20
	57	Can Tichener**	6.0	200	20

NICHOLLS STATE OFFENSE

QB	15	Michael Okonkwo*	6.1	175	20
RB	18	Jamal Simmons*	6.2	180	20
FB	77	Isaac Bender*	6.3	205	20
TE	61	Art Flowers*	6.2	264	20
WR	79	Jake Robinson*	6.1	190	20
	67	Danathan Pava*	6.1	180	20
	81	Nigel Bormi*	6.1	180	20
	54	Matt Blanchard*	6.0	180	20
	75	Justin Frazier*	6.2	210	20
	69	Cody Projean*	6.1	205	20
LB	13	Raymond Bimler*	6.1	180	20
	66	Brenton Combs*	6.1	180	20
CB	18	Shontel Mendoncel**	6.1	195	20
	14	Chris Burton**	6.2	190	20
	17	Reedrick Jones**	6.1	180	20
	7	Cal Jones**	6.1	175	20
FS	46	Tech Monroe**	6.1	190	20
	40	Grain Thomas**	6.1	195	20
PK	22	Michael McKenney**	6.0	190	20
	49	Rayvin Jones**	6.0	180	20
	35	David Lamborn**	6.2	180	20
	35	Adam Bricker**	6.1	180	20
PK	69	Alex Romero**	6.2	160	20

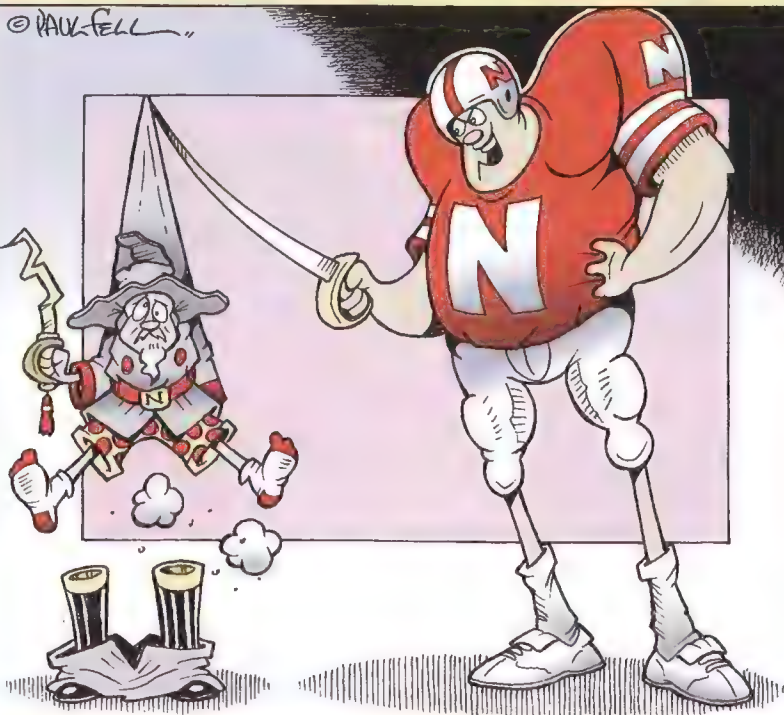
NICHOLLS STATE DEFENSE

LB	89	Chris Noble*	6.1	200	20
	95	Syle Freeman*	6.2	205	20
CB	35	Greg Gorman*	6.2	200	20
	10	Baylor Grimes*	6.1	205	20
FS	42	Matt Calamito*	6.1	200	20
	91	Jordan Stone*	6.1	200	20
TE	91	Dominique Goss*	6.1	200	20
	91	Brady Vavala*	6.1	200	20
FB	82	Levon Bailey*	6.1	200	20
	48	Demek Spain*	6.1	200	20
WR	42	Corey Vavala*	6.1	200	20
	61	Robert Pitt*	6.1	200	20
PK	65	Quinn Cash**	6.0	210	20
	45	Ivan Perry**	6.1	210	20
	5	Jermaine Sappin**	6.0	180	20
	70	Dominique Daniels**	6.2	190	20
	1	Jason Brooks**	6.1	200	20
	1	Marques Lewis**	6.1	180	20
	40	Kateem Moore**	6.1	210	20
	40	Jordan Odom**	6.1	210	20
	40	Jonay Faison**	6.1	210	20
	40	Marques Hall**	6.1	210	20
	40	Sean Comeau**	6.10	160	20

THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

NEBRASKA vs. NICHOLLS STATE

© PAUL FELL



SEPTEMBER 9, 2006
COLONELS COME OUT ON SHORT END OF THIS DUEL
WHEN THEY ATTEMPT TO CHALLENGE THE
BLACKSHIRT DEFENSE!

Picks

Sept. 9



Brian Hill
Editor



Mike Babcock
Cont. Editor



Terry Douglass
G.I. Independent



Sean Callahan
Rivals.com



Lon Nichols
KLKN-TV
(Guest)

Nicholls State
@Nebraska

Nebraska 52,
Nicholls St. 9

Nebraska 56,
Nicholls St. 3

Nebraska 56,
Nicholls St. 7

Nebraska 48,
Nicholls St. 7

Nebraska 55,
Nicholls St. 5

Ohio State
@Texas

Texas 20,
Ohio St. 19

Ohio St. 17,
Texas 14

Ohio St. 20,
Texas 14

Texas 24,
Ohio St. 20

Ohio St. 21,
Texas 10

Colorado vs.
Colorado St.

Colorado 23,
Colo. St. 21

Colo. St. 24,
Colorado 21

Colorado 17,
Colo. St. 13

Colo. St. 21,
Colorado 17

Colo. St. 28,
Colorado 24

Penn State@
Notre Dame

Penn St. 27,
N. Dame 24

N. Dame 28,
Penn St. 17

N. Dame 31,
Penn St. 27

N. Dame 34,
Penn St. 28

N. Dame 35,
Penn St. 17

Last Week
Season

4-0
4-0

4-0
4-0

4-0
4-0

4-0
4-0

4-0
4-0

To advertise in Huskers Illustrated, contact Jeff Tudor
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Nebraska's running backs (top) and offensive linemen (bottom) sign autographs during Fan Day festivities Aug. 19 at Memorial Stadium. The annual event drew more than 6,000 fans.



NEW FACILITIES



DESTINY IS NOT
IT IS A MA

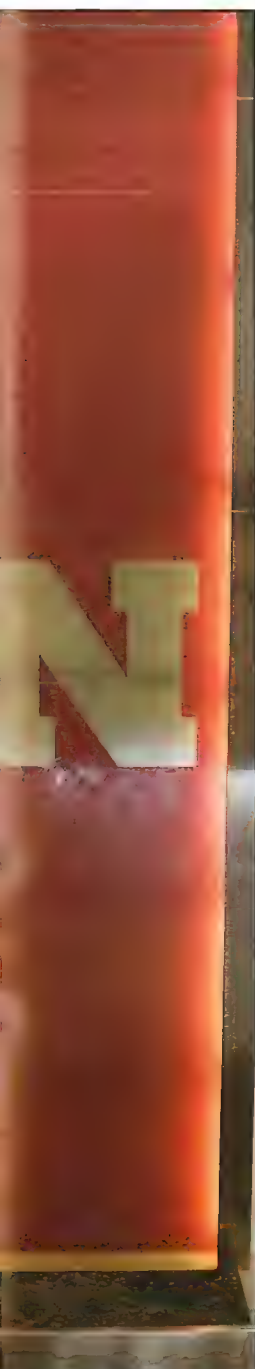
WILL



Photos By Scott Bruhn

**MATTER OF CHANCE,
TER OF CHOICE**

EDDINGS BRYAN 1899



Visitors to the Tom and Nancy Osborne Athletic Complex (top middle and top right) are greeted by a 40-foot high waterfall (bottom middle) with water cascading between sheets of glass next to a granite wall that honors every Nebraska fan who contributed \$100 or more to the Husker Nation Championship Drive. The Strength Complex (bottom left), is 50 percent larger than NU's previous weight room. The expanded Athletic Medicine Center, which has quadrupled in size from the previous training room, includes a large hydrotherapy area (bottom right) and a private X-ray room. The \$50-million project includes the Hawks Championship Center (top left), which features 81,200 square feet, including a full-length field identical to Memorial Stadium's game field.

Juco Corners Consider NU

*Highly regarded
junior college
defensive backs
planning to visit*

By Rick Shaw

During his early tenure as Nebraska's head coach, Bill Callahan has shown a strong willingness to recruit junior college athletes. This strategy appears to be paying huge dividends for the Nebraska football team.

A number of former junior college players are expected to play key roles for the Huskers in 2006. Starters Barry Cryer, Ola Dagunduro, Steve Octavien, Andre Jones, and Zac Taylor are all former juco standouts who were recruited to Lincoln by Callahan and his staff. In addition, playmakers Kenny Wilson, Frantz Hardy, Carl Nicks, Tyrell Spain and Maurice Purify are players who have recently made their way to Nebraska via the juco ranks.

Callahan and his assistants have pledged that they have and will continue to strive to sign the best football prospects available, whether they be at the high school, prep school or junior college level.

Nebraska has been able to lock up some of the nation's top junior college defensive back talent over the past couple of years, signing Zackary



Junior college defensive backs Woodny Turenne (left) and Armando Murillo are planning to visit Nebraska.

Bowman to a letter of intent in 2005 and Andre Jones in 2006. The Huskers appear to be in good shape to add, yet another, blue-chip cornerback or two out of the juco ranks in 2007.

Woodny Turenne, a 6-foot-2, 190-pound cornerback out of the College of the Sequoias in California may very well be the top defensive back prospect in the country. With offers from many of the nation's top programs, including Florida, California, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska,

USC, Texas A&M and UCLA, the fleet-footed (4.4-second 40-yard dash) Turenne is projected to become an instant starter at the Division I level.

Though Florida appears to be the early favorite to land Turenne, the Huskers have already managed to secure an official visit slot from the talented athlete.

"I have an official visit set with Ole Miss and one with Nebraska," Turenne said. "I can't remember the dates."

Turenne won't say Florida is ahead of everyone else, "but I am, originally, from Florida, and they are the ones showing me the most love right now," he said. "I'm going to take my visits and see what school I fit in with best."

Armando Murillo is another talented cornerback with a Husker offer. The 6-0, 195-pound athlete out of Eastern Arizona Community College is scheduled to visit Lincoln on Sept. 29, and the Huskers appear to be in the driver's seat for his commitment.

"I am real excited to see what the

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2007

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Anthony Blue	DB	5-10	172	4.57	Cedar Hill, Texas
Jared Crick	DE	6-6	245	4.8	Cozad, Neb.
Demetrious Davis	DT	6-2	286	5.22	St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton)
Ian Harris	TE	6-3	217	4.76	San Antonio, Texas (Churchill)
Ryan Hill	TE	6-3	230	4.7	Arvada, Colo. (West)
Niles Paul	WR	6-2	210	4.4	Omaha, Neb. (North)
Shawn Sullivan	DB	5-11	182	4.4	Brenham, Texas
DeAndre West	DB	6-1	195	4.4	Oakland, Calif. (Wilson Prep)
Patrick Witt	QB	6-4	215	4.95	Wylie, Texas

program is like," Murillo said. "I heard it is one of the best of the best in the country. I know the fans are crazy there, and I just want to get the feel of that environment during my visit because that is more than likely where I'm going to be."

Murillo, who runs a 4.39-second 40-yard dash, was named a first-team All-America selection by the National Junior College Athletic Association. He tallied seven interceptions from his cornerback slot, returning two of his picks for touchdowns.

Murillo currently claims offers from Oregon State, Arizona State and Michigan State, in addition to Nebraska. It's the Huskers, however, who appear to hold the current recruiting edge.

"As of right now, that (Nebraska) is where my heart is," Murillo said. "That is where I want to go. That is my spot right there . . . like Nebraska is for me. They need me to come in and play. I am not going to go to a school that just wants me. I want to go to a school that needs me, and I'm going to be their man."

DeAngelo Willingham is yet a third juco cornerback that Nebraska has set its sights on. The 6-0, 205-pounder out of the College of the Desert in Palm Desert, Calif., received his offer from the Huskers more than four months ago.

Willingham earned first-team all-conference honors in 2005, utilizing outstanding speed (4.35 40-yard dash) to snag three interceptions. Though Nebraska is currently his only offer, Oregon, Auburn, Minnesota and a host of other colleges are still giving chase.

"I already have my visit scheduled with Nebraska for Nov. 24 to watch their game against Colorado," Willingham said. "I really like Nebraska. It is a good football atmosphere. I wouldn't mind playing there. I've always watched them on TV a lot."

"My top two team are Nebraska and Oregon right now and, right behind them, would be Auburn."

After securing the signature of the nation's top juco wide receiver, Maurice Purify, in 2006, the Huskers are, once again, in a battle for one of the nation's best in this recruiting cycle.

AJ Jackson, a 6-6, 220-pound blue-chipper from the College of the

RECRUITING NOTES

Florida Holds Many Targets

By Sean Stevens

The Sunshine State of Florida has long been a hotbed of high school football prospects. The "Big Three" of Florida, Florida State and Miami were among the top college football programs in the 1990s, and the base of their teams were Florida players.

Nebraska has also done well in the past in Florida, with players such as Tommie Frazier, Tyrone Williams and Fabian Washington starring in the scarlet and cream. When Bill Callahan took over as Husker head coach, he announced a renewed emphasis in Florida among his primary recruiting goals, and the Huskers have signed one Floridian each of his three years in Lincoln. Tallahassee's Danny Muy, Clearwater's Harrison Beck, and Daytona Beach's Cruz Barrett have all signed with the Huskers. Muy and Beck have since left Lincoln, but the coaching staff's emphasis on Florida prospects continues.

● When top Florida targets for 2007 are mentioned, the name Noel Devine seems to come first. Devine has been a legend among recruiting geeks since his freshman film from North Fort Myers hit the Internet in 2004. Devine is a whirling dervish with incredible balance and good straight-line speed. His highlights invoke memories of Barry Sanders.

Rivals.com rates Devine as a five-star prospect and the No. 16-ranked player nationally at all positions. He plans to pick a college on Signing Day and continues to list Nebraska among his favorites. Getting him away from Florida State and Miami will be difficult, and USC also is showing strong interest, but if he visits Lincoln there is a chance.

● Another running back the Huskers have targeted is Bo Williams of Oakland Park. At 6-foot-1 and 203 pounds with 4.48-second speed in the 40-yard dash, Williams is an athletic prospect.

He currently claims an astounding 74 scholarship offers but has scheduled only one official visit — to Lincoln Sept. 8. Coincidentally Williams will celebrate his birthday during the trip. He will be bringing his father along with him, who claims to be a Nebraska fan. Pittsburgh, Colorado, Florida and Florida State are all heavily involved, but the Huskers are in good shape here.

● Latravis Washington of Bradenton is listed by Rivals.com as a dual-threat quarterback, however NU is recruiting him as a safety. That has not deterred his interest in the Huskers.

"Nebraska definitely has the edge on everybody else right now," he said. "I like their tradition and academic support and, more than anything, it just feels like home. I went up there for camp, and although it was over 1,000 miles away from home, I felt comfortable. That's important to me."

Washington is the cousin of former Husker Fabian Washington. Fabian has given him positive feedback on the NU program, but has also told Latravis that the decision is totally his to make. Ohio State is the primary competition for his signature, although he also has offers from schools like Auburn, Michigan and Notre Dame.

● Some other possibilities to become Huskers are Apopka's 6-foot-4, 215-pound defensive end Kyle Wilbur, 5-foot-11, 169-pound cornerback Aaron Henry of Immokalee, and 6-foot-1, 315-pound defensive tackle Tim Lamb of Tallahassee. This could be a big year for NU in the Sunshine State. ■

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October 21 Texas (home)

HOME GAMES

9-2 Louisiana
9-9 Nichols St.
9-23 Troy
9-30 Kansas
10-21 Texas
11-4 Missouri
11-24 C.U.

AWAY GAMES

9-16 USC
10-7 Iowa St.
10-14 Kansas St.
10-28 Oklahoma St.
11-11 Texas A&M

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Sequoias in Visalia, Calif., had 17 touchdowns as a freshman in 2005, earning first-team all-state honors. Though he already claims offers in the double digits, three schools appear to be standing out above the rest.

"I have got a lot of offers," Jackson said, "but the main ones that I'm into, you know, are Ole Miss, USC, Nebraska . . . those schools. I love all of those schools."

Ole Miss appears to hold the early advantage in Jackson's recruitment, after signing his friend and teammate, quarterback Brent Schaeffer, to a letter of intent in February.

Nebraska hopes to secure a commitment from at least one juco defensive tackle prospect in 2007. One of the top options this time around is Joseph Townsend, a 6-4, 295-pound difference-maker out of Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, Calif.

Townsend, the brother of former Husker defensive lineman Larry Townsend, originally signed with Washington State out of high school. Though he is still interested in the Cougars, he admits, that the Huskers

are a team high on his list.

"I have an offer from Nebraska, in addition to my offer from Washington State," Townsend said. "Nebraska has had powerhouse years, as one of the college football factories in college football. You can compare them with some like Miami, USC, Ohio State. It is a great university, and they have put out great football players."

"I like the D-line coach (John Blake) over there. He has all of the credentials. He has been there and done that. He has all of the rings and has coached all of the best players. Basically, Nebraska is like a dream fit really. It seems like the perfect place."

Townsend, who has clocked a 4.86-second 40, is scheduled to visit Lincoln on Sept. 29.

Nebraska has been successful at recruiting junior college talent during Bill Callahan's tenure. Look for that trend to continue as the Nebraska staff works to assemble its recruiting class of 2007. ■

For more daily recruiting information, visit huskersillustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

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BASKETBALL NOTES

HOOPING IT UP

Doc Sadler has kept busy since being introduced as the Nebraska men's coach. After traveling to Australia to persuade Aleks Maric to rethink a request to be released from his scholarship and stopping in Brooklyn to ensure that Jamel White would return for his sophomore season, Sadler invited Mike Smith back to the team and added Seketoure "Sek" Henry to the roster.

Smith, a 6-foot-2 guard from the Bronx, N.Y., redshirted last season but his scholarship was pulled, for unspecified reasons, and he planned to transfer to Independence (Kan.) Community College.

The 6-3, 180-pound Henry is a combination guard from Lynwood, Calif. He played at The Patterson School in North Carolina for a 37-3 team, averaging 14 points and four assists. His season-scoring high was 51 points. Henry signed a letter of intent with Arizona State out of high school but opted for prep school. "For a team that wants to play 94 feet every game it's important to always find guards who can be successful in our system, and he will add depth on the perimeter," Sadler said in a release.

Kris Douse and Roburt Sallie, also prep school recruits, were waiting for the go-ahead from the NCAA Clearinghouse when classes began at Nebraska, a cause for concern by Sadler. Douse was subsequently cleared, but Sallie was still waiting as the second week of classes began.

Sallie and Henry were teammates at The Patterson School. Another teammate at the North Carolina prep school, 7-foot Toni Soda signed a letter of intent with Nebraska in November, but because of what was reported as an English language deficiency he was unable to enroll.

Sadler also talked with former Cornhusker Marcus Walker, in an attempt to persuade him to remain. Walker, however, planned to enroll at Indian Hills (Iowa) Community College.

If Sallie isn't cleared, Nebraska would have one of its NCAA-allotted 13 scholarships open. Sadler told the Omaha World-Herald that he didn't plan to fill it, however.



Mike Smith



Seketoure Henry originally signed with Arizona State.

MEN'S ROSTER

Ryan Anderson	G	6-4	Fr.	Seattle, Wash.
Chris Balham	F	6-8	RFr.	Lenexa, Kan.
Kris Douse	F	6-7	Fr.	Toronto, Ontario
Sek Henry	G	6-3	Fr.	Lynwood, Calif.
Jim Ledsome	F	6-9	So.	Severna Park, Md.
Aleks Maric	C	6-11	Jr.	Sydney, Australia
Kyle Marks	F	6-7	So.	Riviera Beach, Fla.
Marcus Perry	G	6-2	Sr.	Anniston, Ala.
Charles Richardson Jr.	G	5-9	Sr.	Maywood, Ill.
*Roburt Sallie	G	6-5	Fr.	Sacramento, Calif.
Mike Smith	G	6-2	RFr.	Bronx, N.Y.
Jay-R Strowbridge	G	6-0	Fr.	Ardmore, Ala.
Paul Velander	G	6-2	So.	Blacksburg, Va.
Jamel White	G	6-3	So.	Brooklyn, N.Y.

*Yet to be cleared by the NCAA

STAFF ADDITIONS

Sadler announced the hiring of assistants Tony Benford and Philip Mathews the last week in August. Benford, who spent the last eight seasons at Arizona State, had just been hired by Sadler at Texas-El Paso in July, while Mathews was the head coach at San Bernardino Valley College the past two seasons. His teams were a combined 51-17 in those seasons. Mathews also was the head



Tony Benford



Philip Mathews

coach at Division I San Francisco for nine seasons (139-123) and Ventura College for 10 seasons (298-56).

DELAYED ENROLLMENT

Husker women's recruit Ana Fakatou didn't enroll for fall semester classes but plans to enroll for second semester and redshirt, leaving two seasons of eligibility for the transfer from Cypress (Calif.) College. The 5-11 forward, an early letter-of-intent signee, was a two-time conference most valuable player, finishing her two-year career with 1,095 points and 548 rebounds.

Her coach at Cypress College called her "our Tongan warrior." Fakatou was born in Tonga. Her family moved to Hawaii and then soon after to Long Beach, Calif., in 1990. She averaged 17.6 points and 8.4 rebounds last season and shot 52 percent for her junior college career.

WOMEN'S ROSTER

Chelsea Aubry	F	6-2	Sr.	Kitchener, Ontario
Nikki Bober	C	6-4	Fr.	Murdock, Neb.
Ashley Ford	G	5-7	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb.
Kelsey Griffin	F	6-2	So.	Eagle River, Alaska
Kiera Hardy	G	5-6	Sr.	Kansas City, Mo.
Kala Kuhlmann	G	5-10	Fr.	Charter Oak, Iowa
TK LaFleur	G	5-9	So.	Houston, Texas
Cory Montgomery	F	6-2	Fr.	Cannon Falls, Minn.
Nicole Neals	G	5-6	Fr.	Chandler, Ariz.
Danielle Page	F	6-2	Jr.	Monument, Colo.
Jelena Spiric	F	6-0	Sr.	Belgrade, Serbia & Montenegro
Yvonne Turner	G	5-9	Fr.	Omaha, Neb.

TV TIME

Coach Connie Yori's Huskers are scheduled to play twice on the FSN television network, Feb. 3 against Baylor at the Devaney Sports Center and Feb. 10 at Colorado. FSN also will televise the quarterfinals, semifinals and championship game of the Big 12 Tournament.

HUSKERS IN THE PROS

Eric Piatkowski is among three former Cornhuskers on NBA rosters for the 2006-07 season, signing a two-year contract worth a reported \$2.3 million with the Phoenix Suns in mid-July. The Suns picked up the 12-year NBA veteran as a back-up, for his 3-point shooting. "I understand why I'm here," he told the Associated Press. "I'm not coming in here thinking I'm going to shock everybody and start."

However, there will be "nights where I come in and I'm going to get hot and have a big night and help the team win," he said.

The Indiana Pacers made him the 15th overall pick in the 1994 draft then immediately traded him to the Los Angeles Clippers. He holds Clippers records for 3-point shots attempted (1,835) and made (738) and for 3-point percentage (.402). He has shot just under 40 percent from 3-point range for his career. He played in a career-low 29 games for the Chicago Bulls last season.

Tyrone Lue (Atlanta Hawks) and Mikki Moore (New Jersey Nets) are the others.

In addition, former Cornhuskers Brian Conklin, Jason Dourisseau, Wes Wilkinson, John Turek, Cookie Belcher, Andrew Drevo and Venson Hamilton were planning to play in Europe.

Conklin — Omniworld Almere, The Netherlands

Wilkinson — Okapi Aalstar, Belgium

Dourisseau — EnBW Ludwigsburg, Germany

Turek — MPC/Capitals Gronigen, The Netherlands

Belcher — Bnei Hasharon, Israel

Drevo — Nanterre, France

Hamilton — Real Madrid, Spain ■

'You Can Just Play'

Senior Busboom sees positives in move to libero

By Todd Henrichs

Dani Busboom, it seems, might have been better served not having grown up a Husker volleyball fan.

Busboom's childhood home was near Cortland, barely 30 minutes from Lincoln and close enough that as a youngster, Busboom was able to watch Nebraska's volleyball program with the keen eye of someone whose intense desire it was to become a Husker one day.

Busboom can no doubt recount stories of Nebraska's biggest hitters, its fearless defenders, and yes, the countless All-American setters to come through the program. She knows of the two-page spread in the team's media guide that proclaims Nebraska as "Setter University," a legacy that Busboom was charged with carrying on.

"As a setter at Nebraska, you have to be one of the best in the country," said Busboom, who came into the difficult job with little experience at the demanding position.



As a junior, Dani Busboom played in all 116 games, averaging 6.45 assists and 1.82 digs per game.

"The expectations were set really, really high as a setter, and that meant always having so many questions, being questioned about your confidence," Busboom added. "It wears you out."

So for her senior season, Busboom has traded in those weighty expectations for a different colored uniform. No, the native Nebraskan, hasn't left for another school. Busboom has only swapped positions and jersey colors, shifting to libero in hopes of leading the Huskers to a historic final-four appearance in Omaha this December.

The new position seems a perfect fit since when sprawling in attempts to dig the best that opposing hitters can offer, Busboom is able to show her grit and competitiveness. Those aspects, along with her tremendous athletic ability, were what first prompted Nebraska coach John Cook to take a chance on recruiting Busboom as a setter before she had ever even set a ball in a real match.

As a libero, Cook said Busboom's tenacity will create a different mindset on Nebraska's side of the net. For Busboom, the mindset of playing as the libero is much different from her old job.

"As a setter, you have to think about strategy," Busboom said. "Who are you going to set? Who's hot? What system are you running?"

SCHEDULE

Aug. 29 San Diego W 3-0

Labor Day Tournament At Lincoln, Neb.

Sept. 1 St. Mary's 7 p.m.

Sept. 2 Middle Tennessee State 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 3 Long Beach State 2 p.m.

Players Challenge At Lincoln, Neb.

Sept. 8 Louisville 7 p.m.

Sept. 9 Cal Poly TBA

Sept. 10 Minnesota 2 p.m.

Sept. 13 Kansas 7 p.m.

Sept. 16 @Oklahoma 7 p.m.

Sept. 20 Iowa State 7 p.m.

Sept. 23 Texas Tech TBA

Sept. 24 @Creighton 2 p.m.

Sept. 30 @Baylor TBA

Oct. 4 Kansas State 7 p.m.

Oct. 7 @Texas A&M

Oct. 11 @Missouri 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 14 Colorado 7 p.m.

Oct. 18 @Texas 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 25 Missouri 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 28 @Kansas State 7 p.m.

Nov. 1 @Texas Tech 7 p.m.

Nov. 4 Oklahoma TBA

Nov. 8 @Iowa State 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 11 @Colorado 8 p.m.

Nov. 15 Texas A&M 7 p.m.

Nov. 18 Baylor 7 p.m.

Nov. 22 @Kansas 7 p.m.

Nov. 25 Texas 7 p.m.

Nov. 30-Dec. 3
NCAA First/Second Rounds
At Campus Sites

Dec. 8-9
NCAA Regionals
At Campus Sites

Dec 14-16
NCAA Final Four
At Qwest Center (Omaha, Neb.)

"As a libero, you can just play. All you've got to worry about is getting the ball. You've got to be quick, you've got to have a lot of emotion and you've got to be competitive. Those are probably my best assets. It's a good change as far as my mentality and my personality."

Cook went so far as to predict that Busboom can be the best libero in the nation this season, that coming before she had even played the position in a college match.

Busboom did come up with 20 digs in Nebraska's Red-White Scrimmage last month, impressive considering that 22 digs was the most an NU player recorded in a three-game match all of last season.

"You can see how much she covers the court, sometimes it seems like she takes the whole court by herself flying around out there," Cook said. "She touched a lot of balls, but now we'd like her to be a little more efficient when she touches those balls, get her a little bit more under control. I think you'll see that improve as the year goes on."

As a result, Busboom says she is

more confident in her abilities than at any other time in her career. And while she didn't reach her goal of becoming the All-American setter in the fashion of Husker greats Greichaly Cepero, Fiona Nepo, Christy Johnson, Val Novak, Lori Endicott, Tisha Delaney or Cathy Noth, Busboom intends to be just as much of a different-maker this season, only at a new position.

Nebraska's team, too, is confident despite the offseason loss of national player of the year Christina Houghtelling to shoulder surgery. Busboom said the Huskers are just as focused, just as excited, as they were before learning Houghtelling would be out for the year.

Each has committed to picking up a bigger share of the load, including the setters, who Busboom has told to not "let anything bum them."

"We're still going to be darn good," she said, "and we're ready to prove that to everybody." ■

Todd Henrichs covers the Nebraska volleyball team for the Lincoln Journal Star. He can be reached at 473-7439 or thenrichs@journalstar.com

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Learning To Lead

Junior Dennis takes on the challenge of being a leader

By Katelyn Kerkhove

Junior Tanya Dennis has always been good at soccer. She has always had a passion for the game and a natural speed that keeps offensive players at bay.

But there is one thing she has had to work at during her three years as a Cornhusker — her leadership. And she has conquered it.

"I think she leads by example, really," Nebraska head coach John Walker said. "She's calm, composed and a good individual communicator. It's a hard thing for someone to develop that during their college career, but she's really taken it upon herself to do it, and she's really well respected by her teammates."

One of only five upperclassmen on a roster of 27, Dennis will be required to act as a leader and communicator this season for the Huskers. Though she has seen success in other parts of her game, she's willing to admit her weakness comes in her vocal expression, or lack thereof.

Over the past three years, the 5-foot-6-inch midfielder has improved her defensive skills while playing for the Canadian National team as well as earning Big 12 Academic All-American honors in fall 2003 and spring 2006. She also has contributed on offense for the Huskers, scoring four goals and making six assists despite being used primarily on defense.

But even with all her talents, leading by example has never been the issue.

Dennis has struggled most with the communication aspect of the game since her start at Nebraska. Not



In her first two seasons, Tanya Dennis has produced four goals and six assists despite being used primarily as a defensive midfielder.

much of a conversationalist, she said she would rather keep to herself than vocally rally her teammates behind her.

Coming into her freshman year, she rarely spoke out of turn or raised her voice and, because of this, could never fully communicate with her teammates on the field like she needed to.

Walker zoned in on the problem and required Dennis to attain the necessary communication skills as he knew he would need her leadership in

the future.

"It's something she's really worked at," Walker said. "She'll probably tell you, you know maybe two years ago she had a lot of work to do in this area, but she has really embraced the role and what she needs to do to get better at it."

Because she would rather not talk, Dennis is quick to rattle off her list of attributes — fast, passionate and aggressive. But of her list, her quiet demeanor, her reserved nature and her

laid-back personality quickly vanish when she steps on the field and a teammate needs her guidance.

"I'm not the huge 'Rah! Rah! Let's get em girls!' type," Dennis said. "I'm more of the calm kind. But people come to me if they need something personal. I think I can give them good advice."

One thing that Dennis said she is more than willing to help with is injuries. During her freshman season, she experienced three consecutive concussions. While her body was ready and willing to play, it was not safe for her to participate. Forced to sit on the sidelines and watch, she said it was this time that helped her realize how much her sport and her teammates meant to her.

"You can't really do anything for (concussions), so it was just about keeping myself constantly motivated — telling myself, 'You've got to come back,'" Dennis said. "During practices, I had to watch, and having to watch made me want to get in there even more. I just love soccer so much. I can't imagine not having soccer in my life."

Like many athletes, Dennis has had her fair share of struggles, but most have been with the mental side of her

FULL-STRENGTH, FINALLY

Coach John Walker's Huskers opened the season without four players and were tied by Wright State. Senior Brittany Timko and sophomores Aysha Jamani, Selenia Iacchelli and Sari Raber all were playing with Canadian National teams. Timko, Jamani and Iacchelli were responsible for 51 percent of Nebraska's points last. Timko is a two-time Big 12 Player of the Year and third-team All-American.

Timko also has been included on the Hermann Award Watch List for a second consecutive season. The Missouri Athletic Club annually presents the Hermann Trophy to the top male and female soccer players in Division I of the NCAA. The list of 25 will be pared to 15 in November, with three finalists chosen at the end of the month. The winner will be announced on Dec. 2 in St. Louis.

HURTIN' HUSKERS

The Huskers are without four players because of injuries this season, the most recent a knee suffered by defender Abby Penas in an exhibition loss at Louisville in mid-August. The senior from Grand Island, Neb., was among only three returning defenders with starting experience.

The other injury losses have been sophomore Lauren Isenhower (knee), junior Meghan Hungerford (ankle fracture) and freshman Jackie Walsh (foot).


NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Nebraska is scheduled to play eight consecutive matches at home before opening conference play at Missouri and at Iowa State on Sept. 22 and 24. Since the advent of the Big 12 in 1996, the Huskers have won eight conference titles and five conference tournament championships.

game rather than the physical. With her talents as an athlete and, more specifically, a soccer player, Dennis has earned the respect of her teammates.

But, Walker said, it is her drive to tailor her personality and take on the challenge of providing leadership that have made her a better all-around person.

"She's definitely developed her leadership and communication skills the most since she's been here," Walker said. "She's always been a good soccer player. She's gotten better for sure, but I would say the jump she made in her ability to make the players around her better has improved drastically, and that's great for our team." ■



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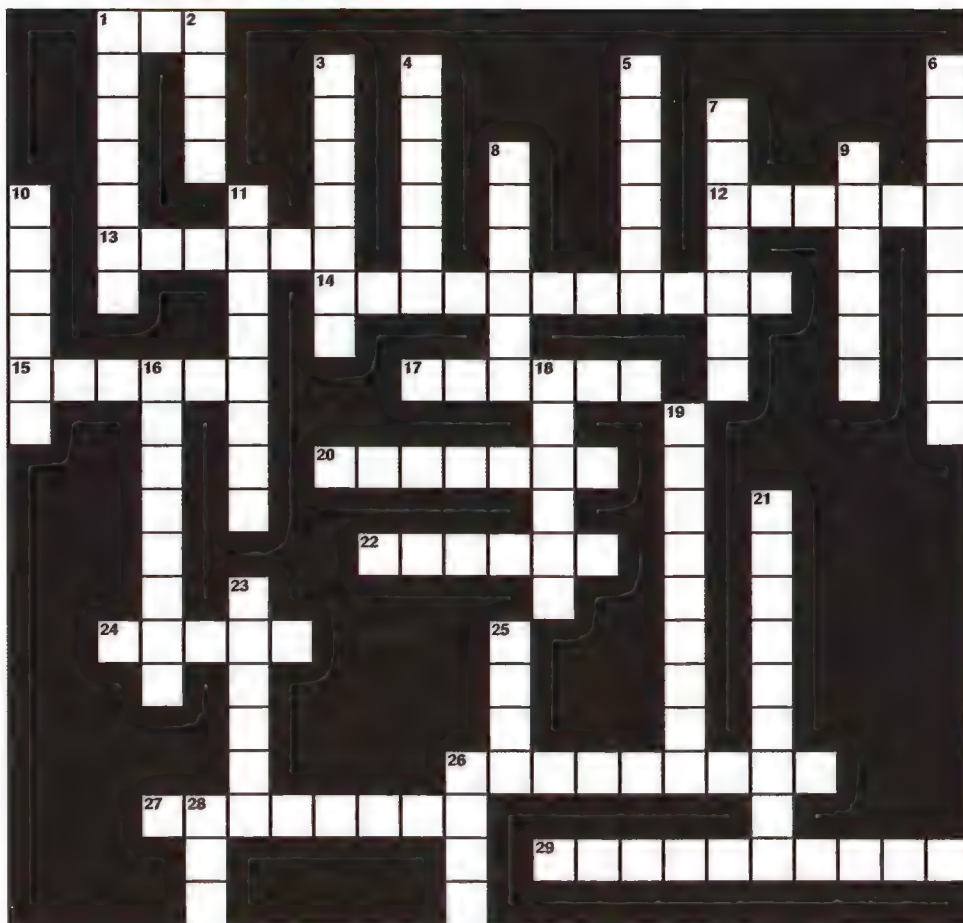
ACROSS

- 1 Defensive lineman from Oregon
- 12 2007 opener
- 13 Special teams captain
- 14 Wears No. 62
- 15 Injured cornerback
- 17 Wears No. 65
- 20 1997 Lombardi Award winner
- 22 Running back coach
- 24 Safety from Omaha
- 26 Nicholls State campus location in Louisiana
- 27 Defensive captain
- 29 2007 nonconference road opponent

DOWN

- 1 Tight end who moved to defense
- 2 Wears No. 61
- 3 Wears No. 54 (offense)
- 4 Offensive captain
- 5 Tight ends coach
- 6 Oct. 7 opponent
- 7 Head strength coach
- 8 First conference opponent
- 9 1997 Outland Trophy winner
- 10 Cornerback from Omaha
- 11 Nicholls State nickname
- 16 Homecoming opponent
- 18 Nicholls State head coach
- 19 Nicholls State conference
- 21 Wears No. 54 (defense)
- 23 Transfer from Arizona State
- 25 Stewart Bradley's home state
- 26 Sept. 23 opponent
- 28 Network for NU-USC telecast

Answers in Sept. 16 issue



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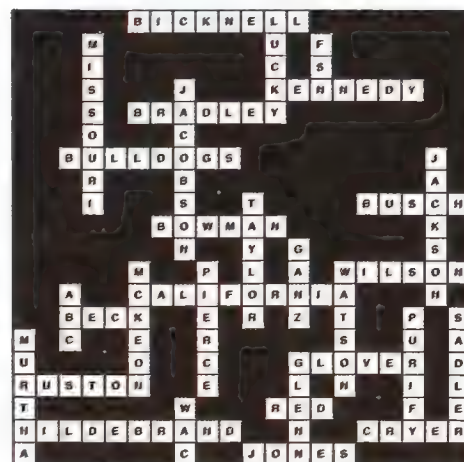
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On The Mend

Linebacker Ruud's 22nd birthday was 'kind of a weird day'



Mike BABCOCK

BO RUUD CELEBRATED his 22nd birthday on the Saturday of the Louisiana Tech game.

Well, not exactly. Celebrated might not be the right word because the junior linebacker doesn't care to be 22 years old. He prefers 21. "I wanted to be there forever," he said. "That's my age."

Rather, it was his age. Now he's "kind of an old man," he said.

A reporter suggested he looked more like 25 because of a scruffy beard.

"I need to go home and shave," Ruud said, smiling.

He seems to pull on the smile with his No. 51 jersey. He enjoys football. You can tell.

In this case, however, his smile was bittersweet. For the second season in a row, he intercepted a pass in the opening game. And he showed no ill effects of the broken arm that sidelined him for the Alamo Bowl game against Michigan and limited him during spring practice. He was back physically.

But he was still on the mend emotionally.

His mom, Jaime, passed away in late June. And her birthday would have been on that day, too. He tried not to, "but every once in a while, right before the game, I was thinking about it," he said. "I knew I shouldn't, just because it kind of gets me down. It puts a damper on things a little bit."

Injuries can heal with rehabilitation and determination. But personal hurt requires something else, which Ruud has, according to defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove, his position coach.

"I'm very proud of him," Cosgrove said the previous week. "That's a hard situation that he's had to go through. I can't imagine. He has responded to that adversity tremendously."

"He's had great focus. He's had a great (training) camp, and he's ready to play."

Ruud was No. 1 on the weakside when the first depth chart was released on the Tuesday before the game. He and Steve Octavien have competed for the starting position since the day Octavien arrived from junior college. Octavien missed all of last season after suffering a leg injury in the first few seconds of the second quarter of the opener against Maine. He also missed four days of preseason practice this year because of an appendectomy. Four days. It's hard to keep a good man down.

Though both were healthy, neither was able to do much against Louisiana Tech. Octavien was credited with two

tackles, Ruud none. The interception "helped me feel like I did something today," he said. "I mean, I got no action all day just from what they were doing scheme-wise."

"It was good just to get in on a play because I was bored out there."

The Bulldogs "were running away" from the weakside linebackers, he said.

"Steve and I were laughing in the locker room. We go, 'We're trying to be impact players here, and we can't get near the ball.' We both didn't do anything. So we laughed about that."

In addition, Nebraska's offense ran the ball and controlled the clock, keeping the defense off the field. "I didn't feel like I even played a game today," said Ruud. "I'm that fresh right now. Really, it was just unbelievable by the offense, controlling the ball. It helps the defense tremendously."

The defense played well, but "I'd grade the offense higher," he said. "We weren't in rhythm the whole time. Sometimes we got out of our rhythm. We'll just (have to) clean a few things up."

"I think the future right now is, this season is looking pretty good."

His interception came early in the fourth quarter, as Louisiana Tech tried to make the score respectable. The Bulldogs faced third-and-20 from the Nebraska 31-yard line, after a pair of false-start penalties on tight end Anthony James. Ruud faked a blitz and dropped in coverage.

"I'm in 'cover 2,' and that means I'm free to read the QB," Ruud said.

He read quarterback Zac Champion's eyes and stepped in front of a pass that appeared to be intended for him. "I almost missed because the sun was in my eyes," he said.

He returned the interception 22 yards to the Cornhuskers' 36-yard line.

Next time, he might pitch the ball to a defensive back, he said, kind of "an option move."

Middle linebacker Corey McKeon said he should have returned it for a touchdown.

"I don't know," Ruud said. "I was thinking I could jump the guy (tackler), could leap him or do something crazy. I always do something weird whenever I get the ball, so I just go with it."

"Maybe my vertical (jump) is gone since I'm 22 now."

One thing is certain; age is no defense against the loss of a loved one.

"It's kind of a weird day for me," he said.

His mom would have been proud. We know that. ■



Bo Ruud intercepted a pass in the first game for the second straight year.

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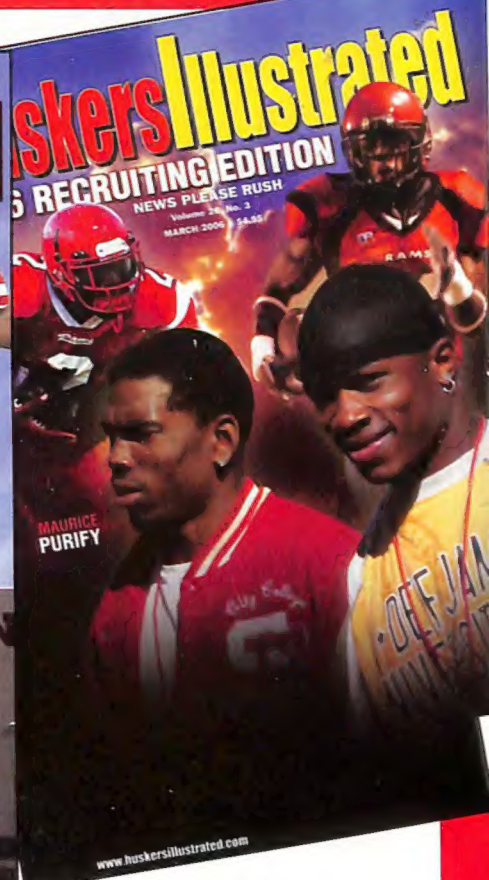
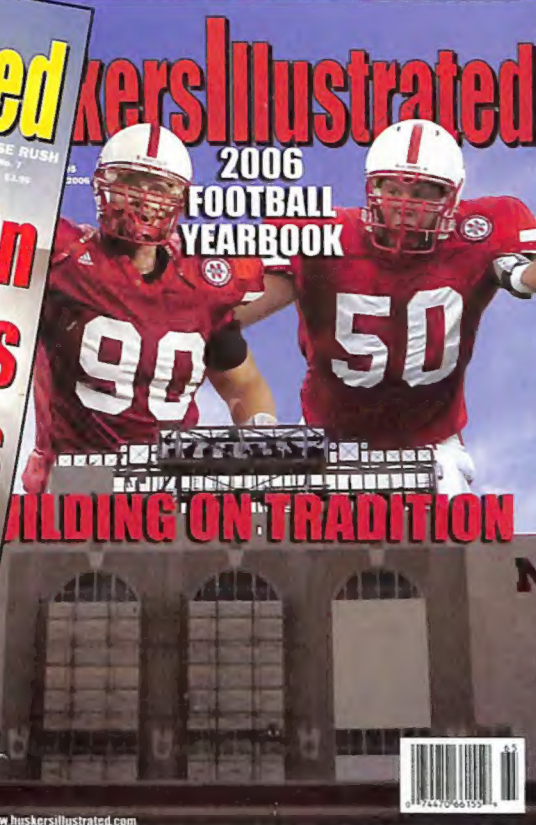
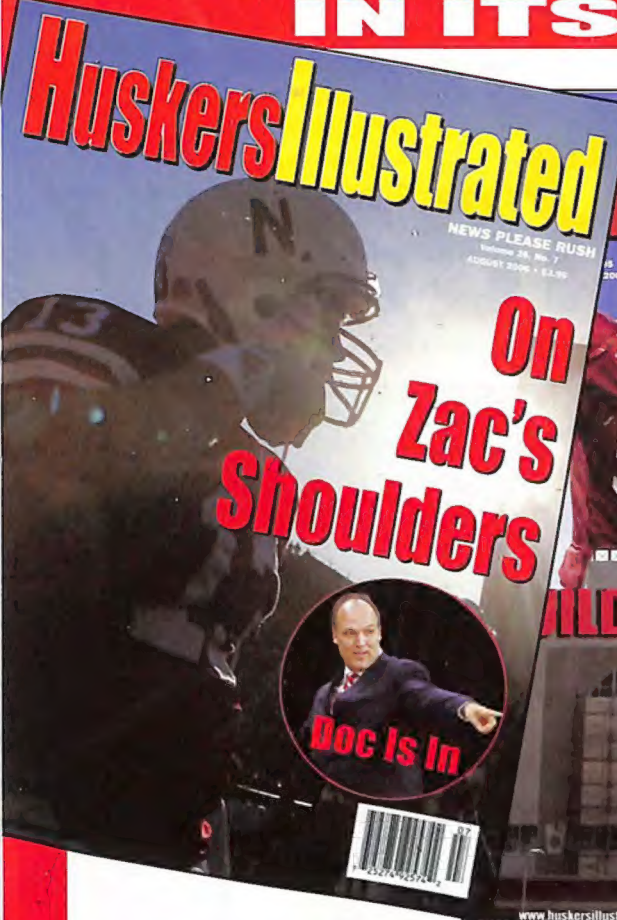
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